Gangs of Athens
An investigation into political representations of youth in Greek tragedy

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GANGS OF ATHENS:

AN INVESTIGATION INTO POLITICAL PRESENTATIONS OF YOUTH IN GREEK TRAGEDY

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Doctor of Philosophy in Classics

Abstract

Classical scholarship makes frequent reference to presentations of youth in ancient Greek literature, most often in relation to characterisations and themes in Greek tragedy. And yet no rigorous study has to date been undertaken solely on these presentations within the genre. This dissertation addresses the gap in the scholarship, offering a comprehensive assessment of tragic presentations of youth. Moreover, this original contribution demonstrates how tragic presentations are a cultural response to the political context in which tragedy was produced. Evidence is offered to support the argument that contemporary social constructions of youth appear clearly in tragedy and that, as the material base for these conceptualisations changes, in relation to a dynamic political climate, so too do the tragic presentations. Each chapter focuses on a specific play and a theme relating to youth within that play. The investigation will move chronologically, beginning with the (undated but, I believe, pre-mid-century) Aeschylean *Prometheus* and ending with Euripides' *Bacchae*, allowing comparison of different presentations over a well-defined historical period. Underpinning this methodology are a number of theoretical strands. First, I argue that themes in the plays reflect in some way the material reality of the social and culture milieu of which they are a product. This view ultimately derives from the Marxist model of the relationship between ideology and the material base, but I argue that the model needs to be flexible and open to alternative explanations of the content of literature. In support of this refinement, more recent sociological theory on the construction of popular conceptions of youth is employed to help establish how actualities of intergenerational anxieties are transformed through the thematic presentations of

tragedy. Reference will also be made to psychoanalytic theory on relations between generations where arguments are made that youth in tragedy offers a local variant on a more universal anxiety about youth and ageing. These arguments, in turn, are informed by classical scholarship that focuses on anthropological explanations for the culturally specific yet universal nature of attitudes towards social groups. The final two chapters deal exclusively with how youth is represented in times of the most acute political crisis, as evidence for the link between the political and literary, before the concluding section which offers a view on what further research is required to embed a 'youth studies' within classical scholarship.

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Chapter 1

Introduction Part I:

The Tragic Sources, Doxography, Theory and Method

If the plays of the tragedians of fifth-century BCE[1] Athens can be broadly considered political, as they most often are in modern scholarship,[2] then what can be made of youth in Greek tragedy? The most cursory survey of the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides offers a dizzying variety of themes and plotlines relating to youth: the townsfolk condemning a young brother and sister to death, the murder of a mother by her son (and vice versa), a grandfather abused by his crazed grandson or a young woman either actually subjected to, or only just saved from, calculated execution by her father. So dominantly has conflict between generations featured in Greek tragedy that hardly a play exists that does not include the strained relationships between young and old. From the Persian Queen's condemnation of Xerxes' immaturity in Aeschylus' *Persae* of 472 through to Oedipus' final denunciation of his son, Polynices, in *Oedipus at Colonus* of 401, the relative positioning – the polarization – of young and old as opposites extended throughout the golden age of Greek tragic theatre. This opposition breaks out into unequivocal violence in plays such as *Prometheus* or *Bacchae,* and even in those dramas, such as *Helen*, that are generally regarded as less negatively charged, the opposition between generations appears as an important theme. And yet, this opposition is not always straightforward. Characters such as

[1] All dates are BCE, unless stated otherwise. I only add BCE when clarity requires it.
[2] While this consensus is widely recognised, a well-argued reiteration of tragedy's social and political content can be found in Gregory (2002, p.145, n.1), including a useful summary of recent work on the *polis* and tragedy.

Antigone, Haemon and Neoptolemus all face manipulative or downright hostile older men and are presented in a positive light.

This thesis will set out to examine to what extent, and in what ways, youth and intergenerational relationships are political in Greek tragedy. In broad terms, such an endeavour may not appear to be original in design. Indeed, almost all major work on Greek tragedy, or on any particular play, will include at least passing reference to the tragedians' use of the theme of intergenerational conflict. Clusters of research have developed from the study of generational relations - from the structuralist to the psychoanalytic - of the *Oresteia* and *Oedipus Tyrannus* in particular.[3] The tragedies of the fifth century have been used to support socio-historical theories on the realities of generational relations of the period, sometimes without due respect for the way that 'reality' is aesthetically mediated by the playwright's craft.[4] On closer inspection, though, the unusual circumstance has evolved where intergenerational conflict is cited as a key constituent of Greek tragedy without there ever having been an extensive investigation carried out on generational opposition exclusively within the genre of tragedy.[5] Just as worryingly, phrases such as 'generation gap' have often been wrenched from their twentieth-century semantic moorings and applied to a wide range of historical and literary settings without the benefit of a full interrogation of the associations implicit in such terms. As a consequence, conflict as a broad category has

[3] Devereux on *Hippolytus* (1985), *Bacchae* (1970), and for a more general ethno-psychoanalytic survey of dreams (1976). Kerenyi & Hillman on *Oedipus* (1987).
[4] As argued by Griffin (1998). While Griffin may have set the pendulum swinging too far towards the notion of tragic theatre as purely spectacular and emotional, his views are a useful reminder of the multiple factors at work in tragedy. His conclusion, however, that tragedy has survived because of its remote and strange content (p.61) seems, at least superficially, to be difficult to reconcile with modern reception theories, such as the essential role of Classics in our self-definition: see Martindale (1993).
[5] See 'Youth' entry in Brill's *New Pauly* for the absence of comprehensive research on youth. Cancik & Schneider (2006, accessed November 2013).

been taken for granted as something of a normative state between generations. The textual evidence used in such scholarly contexts has tended to focus on literary presentations of troublesome young people written by adults and viewed from the perspective of an adult audience. This position has led to an unreflective use of the label 'intergenerational conflict' and synonymous terms in ways that mask the factors that underpin literary presentations of conflict between generations. Scholars make the assumption that a state of opposition exists without questioning why it is that themes to do with youth and conflict are so widely deployed in tragedy. To be clear, this thesis does not set out to examine the theme of intergenerational conflict in isolation from the historical reality of the fifth century BCE: far from it. The next chapter provides a review of the important non-tragic evidence for relationships between age groups in the society and historical period which produced the tragedies, and, as a counterpoint, from the literature of the preceding, 'archaic' period. Moreover, a declaration is necessary early on of the broadly historical materialist methodological approach which the thesis adopts. This does not mean, though, that detailed, one-to-one pieces of evidence for specific historical events will be sought from the tragedies of the period—a methodology which was once particularly popular in France.[6] Rather, occurrences of themes relating to youth and conflict in the plays will be considered as part of the contemporary Athenian imaginative tradition, a general process that encompassed a whole range of political discussion in the broadest sense - i.e. tragedy asked *how should society operate in the polis?* This question obviously had some basis in the lived experience of the citizen audience, and they will have related it to issues in their empirically discernible reality. Exploring the idea of how a tragedian uses the theme of intergenerational conflict, as drawn from social

[6] Delebecque (1951).

constructions and inherited cultural images of youth as a group, but formed within and in relation to an objective reality, will be key to this undertaking. This approach is based loosely on the formal theory of (weak) social constructivism that allows space for both empirical reality and the imagination of a society. Use of the term 'social constructivism' (as a theory and with it 'social construction' as the manifest shared meaning) in this thesis is thus deployed in the broadest sense in relation to themes born of material reality, developed through the collective imagination of Athenian society and refracted through the tragedian's craft.[7]

This approach has been taken broadly before, such as the framework for parts of Barry Strauss' *Fathers and Sons* (discussed more fully below). Youth as a category of historical study, and as a thematic focus in various classical works, is fairly well embedded as part of the classical tradition. Where such works fail to deepen our understanding, and where this research intends to focus, is in exploring the sheer diversity of representations of youth in tragedy. The widest range of political and social settings is available for discussion, as provided by the diversity of actions and scenarios dramatised in the fifth-century Attic tragic plays, as well as an incredibly varied political backdrop. This allows the assessment of a variety of constructions of group characteristics and the changing nature of tragedy, within its historical context, unlocking concomitant reflections on the relationships between generic, politic and social constructions of youth identity. The long-term aim of the current study, perhaps a very ambitious one, is to initiate a shift in perspective within classical scholarship that will transform the study of the category of youth (I return to this in the final chapter of

[7] Key texts on social constructivism and its variants include Searle (1971) and more recently Hacking (2000). This concept is part of a highly technical corner of philosophy and psychology, too complex to be treated in a comprehensive way here. It is the more sociological application that will be employed.

the thesis). The hope is that youth studies can be established as an independent sub-category in its own right in the Classics in the same way as the study of women in ancient society in general, and tragedy in particular, has become intensely more sophisticated through the absorption of elements of gender studies by classical scholars (or ethnic 'otherness' has done, as a result of the now largely mainstream acceptance of anthropological theories in the discipline).[8] Sociology and psychoanalytic studies offer additional ideas relevant to improving our understanding of why young people are represented in literature in the way they are. Just as gender studies or the application of anthropology have rejuvenated modern debate on women or 'the other' in classical society, current debates in fields studying modern youth seem also highly relevant to youth in the ancient world, and in tragedy as a mass medium in particular, as I shall argue.

Adopting a sociological, anthropological or psychoanalytic mindset no doubt involves many risks, not least as approached by a classicist shining a light into corners of theory that have yet to be fully explored by Classics scholars. The dangers of misapplying terminology, failing to understand core theory or unconsciously (or not) attempting to foist modern trends or assumptions onto the ancient world are significant. Full attention will be paid to these risks by the use only of non-classical theory that is supported by the broadest consensus and which is most clearly applicable to the given context. Even more importantly, any non-Classics theory will ultimately be subordinated to the ancient sources and be adapted in the light of secondary classical scholarship on youth. Social theory and modern trends are the point of departure, not

[8] Ethnic 'otherness' was most notably brought within the mainstream of Classics through the work of Hartog (1988) and Hall (1989), as well as framing the theoretical core to Bernal's controversial *Black Athena* (1987); gender was introduced rather earlier by a number of classicists such as Pomeroy (1975), Foley (1981), Lefkowitz & Fant (1982) and Zeitlin (1978).

of arrival, and provide the opportunity to develop a new perspective on presentations of youth that will be explored more fully via tragedy and scholarly reactions to these works. Youth in the ancient world also largely lacks a voice of its own and little attempt has been made to reconstruct a voice of youth, as has been attempted for the voice of women in antiquity, by, for example, 'a resistant reading' which consciously construes a text against its misogynist 'grain'.[9] As with feminist readings of classical tragedy, great care will need to be taken to distinguish attitudes towards youth from the realities of life as a youth.

To recapitulate, aspects of psychoanalytic, sociological and some anthropological theory will be included to help formulate ideas on what it actually means when the tragedians use youth, most often in some form of conflict with authority in society, as a theme in their plays.[10] Through this approach I argue that the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides incorporate in some way the dominant attitudes of the society which shared the playwrights' historical context. In short, there is an inherent assumption that there was the relationship which Marxist theory would anticipate between culture and cultural artifact. My own approach accepts this basic premise but is better defined as a flexible historical materialism without the conscious political agenda of classical Marxism. This approach, too, has been used before but I intend to add the category of 'age' to David Konstan's argument that, 'where society is riven by tensions and inequalities of class, gender and status, its ideology will be complex and unstable, and literary texts will betray signs of the strain involved in forging such

[9] Spentzou (2003).

[10] There is a great deal of overlap between anthropology and sociology in relation to the study of social groups within a society and how these groups' identities are formed. It is specifically social or cultural anthropology to which I largely refer, sociology seemingly less beset by a myriad of specialist subsets.

refractory materials into a unified composition.'[11] The resultant, integrative approach can be summed up thus: themes to do with youth in the texts will be considered as broadly representative of some perceived actualities in ancient Greek society, and that the use of socio-psychological theory relating to youth can help clarify how these representations relate to everyday views on the place of youth in society, that is, as a subject of discussion within the democratic *polis*. It is also hoped that a deeper understanding can be brought to interpretations of themes of youth in conflict, since I situate myself as a researcher as a former troublesome youth, with direct experience of the intensity of feelings relating to fear, honour, shame and respect that come with gang membership.

At this very early point, the thorny issue of definition of terms must be addressed, particularly in relation to the English word 'youth'. This word, especially when used as a noun, seems to be politically charged in contemporary society with solely negative associations (the terms 'teenagers', 'young people' or 'adolescents' don't seem to share this burden), but these modern negative associations are useful when using the term to refer to themes within tragedy, because these plays almost always have an antagonistic dimension.[12] Just as importantly, the term encompasses the full spectrum of both those who may be almost part of adult society, but are not yet enfranchised, as

[11] 1995, p.5. See also Rose (1992) for a more overtly political approach and Hall (2007, p.4-6), for a defence of a reflexive historical materialist approach. All, of course, are in one way or another indebted to Fredric Jameson (1971), but to my mind Gramsci's theory of hegemony is not only historically prior but equally as important, and the strains in encapsulating social constructions in tragedy reflect the tense relationships between the cultural forms and the dominant discourse. See Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (1998) for the theoretical model of cultural hegemony and Williams (1977) on residual, dominant and emergent strands in ideology. Further references to Gramsci relate exclusively to his theory of cultural hegemony.

[12] When it comes to the socially constructed context, there are surely subtle differences in the way the term 'youth' is used as a common or abstract noun. However, the filigree of these linguistic differences is too intricate to discuss in detail here, and there is enough commonality in the semantic field between the grammatical forms for unified interpretations to be justified.

well those who are younger but intellectually mature enough to have begun to embrace a recognizable group identity, one which is separate from those associated with adults or children. This corresponds well with the use of the term in sociological contexts for a group that can include a range from very young teenagers to those who are in their twenties, but have not reached a point of separation from the group identity of their (younger) peers. More technically, the term 'youth' in sociology is also one that is considered to encompass a society's web of references of attitudes towards a group in transition, that is as occupying some sort of liminal conceptual space rather than as a group defined in biological or developmental terms.[13]

With this in mind, the sociological term 'youth' will be adopted for the present thesis as it is does not restrict the subject by age or biological development but acknowledges the liminal aspects of the category and the attendant instability of a transitional phase. Granville Stanley Hall, a pioneering early twentieth century psychologist, linked the ancient and modern conceptions of this transitional phase: 'It is an age of natural inebriation without the need of intoxicants, which made Plato define youth as spiritual drunkenness … We see here the instability and fluctuations now so characteristic.'[14] Reflections on this subgroup seem to match fairly well the attitudes to male citizens under thirty in Greek society, at least in the eyes of an older generation. Kleijwegt also adopts the term using the similar rationale that 'the notion was very strong that young men, although they have reached full physical manhood,

[13] Montgomery (2007, p.25-71). Psycho-social theories, such as those of the Neo-Freudian Erik Erikson, do not fit comfortably into this theoretical framework. At best, such work can be seen as evidence of a society's construction of youth that emerged from the twentieth century. At worst, it is an overly deterministic model that is inseparable from its temporal context, impossible to apply to cross-cultural settings. See Erik Erikson (1968).
14 Granville Stanley Hall (1904, p.74-5).

were still not quite up to the standards of adults.'[15] This important qualification of perception or attribution of values by the older generation will be a core feature of discussion, particularly in Chapter 2 on *Prometheus* - a play in which an older generation appears to set out exactly what it thinks of the 'youthful' Olympians.

In Greek, there are a large number of terms that can be used to refer to different age groups and this has caused difficulties in finding correspondence between specific words, both in Greek and between Greek and English.[16] But as discussed above, the technical categorisation by biological or developmental phases is not necessarily useful. For present purposes, it is the identification of youth as a social category defined by transition that is important, and this concept is not easily definable in a single term other than 'youth' in English and a whole raft of other words in Greek.[17] The psychologist Steven Pinker refers to Steiner's analysis of *Antigone* as a play that retains a contemporary relevance through the encoding of the constant of conflict and confrontation between, amongst others, youth and age.[18] With a similar belief in mind, figures such as Orestes (in his name play), Pentheus (in *Bacchae)* or Zeus (in *Prometheus)* will be discussed within the context of the social construction of their literary characters and thematic settings without a primary emphasis on the specific Greek words used within these plays. That is not to say that philological concerns will be completely abandoned, but rather that no direct attempts will be made to link

15 Kliejwegt (1990, p.50), who discusses at length the twentieth-century debates on whether the concept of adolescence was understood in preindustrial times. Even if the controversial work of Margaret Mead is omitted, the case against an ancient understanding is very weak indeed and Kleijwegt comes down fully in support of the view that adolescence was understood as a distinct period in one's life cycle.
16 See Golden (1990, pp.12-14 on childhood and children) and below.
17 See Nash (1978, p.19, n.13) 'Adolescence generates the widest vocabulary of all; just as "adolescent, youth, juvenile, teenager, and young adult" may all describe an eighteen-year-old today, *neos, hēbē, pais, kouros/koura* may indicate the same stage in Greek.'
18 2002, pp.266-7, n.87.

neos, for example, with a specific English word which covers its usage and meaning in all instances, since such a task would be unlikely to throw adequate light on the presentation of age-related conflict in the plays.[19] However, particular usage of terms to describe young men, such as *hēbē* (especially in relation to Euripides' *Heraclidae*), will be considered within their philological context.

The terms (inter-) generational conflict, generational opposition and youth in conflict have already been deployed and require explanation. The first, inter-generational conflict, is used extensively by scholars in the secondary Classics bibliography to categorise antagonistic interactions between younger and older members of society (or more precisely in the context of classical Greece, younger and older citizens), and this meaning will be retained.[20] Generational opposition is a somewhat softer term that I shall use as shorthand for what will be shown to be a 'value gap' between the attitudes, identity and codes of youth and those of the generation before them and incorporates a sense that the nature of the relationship between generations is defined both by the youth group and society outside this group. Youth in conflict is a slightly more ambiguous term, meaning to me both the conflict between youth within a peer group (as is discussed in Chapter 7 on *Orestes*) and also with the rest of society.[21] The term 'generation' has so far been deployed without comment and some

[19] Although not directly relevant to the present endeavour, the semantic origin of the word 'youth' is interesting, sharing the dual ancestry of 'juvenile' from the Latin and the pre-Teutonic *juwenti.* The collective term for young people appears to have coalesced in English around the 16th century (OED). For the specific etymology see 'youth' in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*. Hoad (ed.) (1996). Accessed 7 November 2010 <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t27.e17328.

[20] Such as throughout in Bertman (1976), Strauss (1993) and Forrest (1975) - see below - and in Hall (2010, p.286).

[21] I have used 'society' a number of times and this should be taken to mean all those who control or support the dominant social construction of values, not necessarily restricted to

qualification is also necessary here. Mannheim's essay on *The Problem of Generations,* first published in 1923, is still considered by some as a seminal sociological treatment of generations,[22] and his is the model that will be used in this thesis. In summary, Mannheim's view of generations is one that defines a generational group not just by their age, but by 'geographical and cultural location; by their actual as opposed to potential participation in the social and intellectual currents of their time and place; and by their differing responses to a particular situation'.[23] This stratification of a biological generation results in the formation of generational units defined by class and the group's 'participation in the same social and historical circumstances.'[24] Thus, in Mannheim's view, political, social and cultural factors are primary in defining a group's identity, rather than mere biological category. It must be kept clearly in mind that the young men in tragedy are always from the same elite social group, or in this sociological lexicon, generational unit. The same generational unit (the sons of wealthy or aristocratic families) appear to be the most common tutees of sophists, and those referred to when youth arises in the works of other ancient authors, as will be discussed in chapter 2, are primarily of this same homogeneous socio-historical group. The same case can be made for readings of archaic literature, but with acknowledgement that the socio-historical affects stratification and that literary responses to the emergence of units will be shaped by the language of the period in question, and I will argue that this language is politically inflected. Use of Mannheim's model means that clearer definition of the research question can be made, namely

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those who have political power and including women and foreigners who uphold the attitudes to youth as a group in society.

[22] Pilcher (1994, p.482).

[23] Ibid, p.483.

[24] Mannheim (1952, p.298).

that the generational conflict under investigation in tragedy is between two sets of generational units belonging to different biological cohorts.

The potential for conflict between youth and adults appears to be a constant in western democratic societies' social discourses, reflected in the periodic bursts of interest in the subject that appear at different times. Some of these seem to be politically motivated when linked to failure to maintain social control, while some are in response to specific incidents such as types of criminal activity.[25] The case for the existence of the concept of 'intergenerational conflict' in the ancient world has already been made. To refer again to Barry Strauss, in 1993 he offered a view of youth at the time of the Peloponnesian Wars that can be interpreted as showing how the constant unconscious hostility between youth and adults broke free and turned into near stasis as Nicias and Alcibiades vied for the role of the *stratēgoi* of the Athenian navy ahead of the disastrous expedition to Sicily.[26] Strauss' methodology is perhaps too heavily dependent on the representation of father-son antagonism in the comic plays of the fifth century, but much of the intellectual thrust of his arguments can be traced back to two landmark works on youth and society in classical Athens: Vidal-Naquet's *The Black Hunter* (1986), containing detailed speculation on the role and provenance of the *ephēbia,* and Froma Zeitlin's journal article entitled 'Dynamics of Misogyny' (1978) in which she reveals the demonstrably structuralizing tendency of Greek tragedy in

[25] The same observation, albeit relating to changing modes of education and the values these different modes represent, is made by Euben (1997, p.20). See doxography below.
[26] Golden (1995) and Davies (1999) have questioned how Strauss can argue for both the homology of inter-generational conflict and the exceptionalism of late fifth-century Athenian youth. A synthesis of the two views in possible if the focus of exceptionalism is placed not on the youth of Athens but on the city's cultural output during the years of the Peloponnesian Wars, perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the final years of output from Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes (although this last playwright's handling of youth relates more closely to traditional views that are not correlate with tragedians' presentations of youth).

relation to enforcing gender roles in the context of intergenerational conflict between the mother Clytemnestra and the son Orestes in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. For all the methodological weaknesses of some of Strauss' arguments, the view of intergenerational conflict - at the point where older adolescents or those physically adult but yet to be politically enfranchised interacted oppositionally with older members of society - appears supported by such works as the *Oresteia*. And yet, both Vidal-Naquet and Zeitlin are open to the charge of over-extending their conclusions on the basis of limited evidence, or relying on supporting evidence drawn from too disparate a set of sources.

Strauss is not alone in discussing ancient responses to the issue of the place of youth in society. The 1990s saw a wave of works published on the subject, almost all attempting to reconstruct ancient attitudes to youth from historical, and in some important cases, literary sources. A brief doxography follows below, which critiques the major works that have focused on youth since the late 1960s. Of course, youth was not absent from earlier scholarship, but the first treatments of youth in the ancient world as a distinct group in opposition to the rest of society, viewed in the context of the loosely defined 'youth' as common currency today, did not appear until the latter half of the twentieth century.

As early as 1968, W. G Forrest introduced the term 'generation gap' into the discussion of youth in classical Athens.[27] This lively intervention took the Oligarchic revolution of 411 as a point from which broad conclusions were drawn about the motivations of the main protagonists, mainly that the young group of upper class citizens saw this as an

[27] The paper was subsequently converted into an article in *Yale Classical Studies* in 1974 (vol. 24, p.37-52).

opportunity for adventure and a way of asserting their youthful aristocratic ideals in opposition to an older, more democratic and *arriviste* section of society.[28]

Around the same time as Forrest's use of the term 'generation gap', other classicists were beginning to include contemporary lexica in their work. Stephen Bertman's *The Conflict of Generations in Ancient Greece and Rome,* published in 1976, contained four chapters with the phrase 'generation gap' in their titles, none of which properly questioned how the term's twentieth-century construction would shape the discussion. Uninspiringly, each chapter simply sets out to find individual examples of how conflict between young and old is found in tragedy, new comedy or Roman lyric poetry, and each succeeds in this limited endeavour. This approach seems to reflect what was, at the time, a fertile area of research, with other work appearing within a few years, such as Eyben's *De jonge Romein volgens de literair bronnen der periode ca. 200 v. Chr. tot ca. 500 n. Chr,* which appeared a year later in 1977.

There followed something of a hiatus in interest in this area with the emphasis of political interest in Classics moving towards gender-based and, in a few rare cases, Marxist readings in the late 1970s and 1980s.[29] Perhaps as a response to the perceived

[28] This suggestion by Forrest is problematic not least due to the modern-day associations of the 'generation gap' with a very specific temporal context. The 'baby boomers' generation appear to be those who first applied the term to themselves, enhancing their own cohort identity. In this way, the term does represent the opening up of difference, but, in popular use, masks the various drivers that caused social change in the mid twentieth century. Most critically, it is not clear that there was and is a clear generation gap across all social groups. I would agree that at times the differences between generations gains greater clarity, often when allied to political, demographic or more latterly technological advances, but the term appears to me to be too bound to the twentieth century to be used without extreme caution. Mannheim's view of generational units, discussed above, tie different generational units to different sets of socio-historical experiences which are articulated by temporal-specific language, and the lexicon of the 1960s appears a good example of this intimate link between language and generation.

[29] Such as de Ste Croix (1981) on Marxist readings and Lefkowitz & Fant (1982) on women in the ancient world.

decline in the controversial nature of such ideological and theoretical battles in the post-Soviet era and the high watermark of second-wave feminism, during the following decade a resurgence of work on youth emerged.[30] Within a short few years, classical scholarship benefitted from a number of major works on youth, most notably Golden's (1990) *Children and Childhood in Classical Athens*, Garland's (1990) *The Greek Way of Life: From Conception to Old Age,* Kleijwegt's (1991) *Ancient Youth*, Strauss' (1993) *Fathers and Sons in Athens*, and Euben's (1997) *Corrupting the Youth*.[31] And in 1996 Alan Sommerstein presented a paper that was subsequently published under the title: 'Problem Kids: Young Males and Society from *Electra* to *Bacchae*'. [32]

Forrest's earlier speculations were taken up wholeheartedly by Strauss, in which a much fuller treatment is given to the relationships between the young and old than Bertman's earlier collection of essays (but only incidentally including female relationships as the work's title, *Fathers and Sons in Athens*, suggests). A great deal of ground is covered by Strauss with all major ancient writing relating to youth between 450 and 350 BCE included in his discussion. This encyclopedic approach has the great benefit of identifying the possible links between literary evidence for attitudes to youth and the myths on which Athens forged its identity, most obviously in relation to the figure of Theseus,[33] all with the aim of reconstructing historical realities of

[30] That is not to say that interest in young people vanished amongst classicists. 1988 saw an early example of digital classical scholarship in the form of Thury's catalogue of words associated with youth in Euripidean tragedy.
[31] For those interested in the homoeroticising of youth in Classical Greece there is also Schnapp's *Images of Young People in the Greek City State*, but this narrow take on youth seems a fairly arbitrary choice for inclusion in the promisingly titled Levi & Schmitt (ed.) (1997) *A History of Young People: Ancient and Medieval Rites of Passage*.
[32] First produced as a conference paper in 1996 and then published in Markantonatos & Zimmermann (2012).
[33] pp.100-129.

generational relations. However, this value is undermined somewhat by the author's conclusion:

> Father-son conflict, therefore, continued past the Peloponnesian War era, just as it has existed before that era. What did change, however, with the changing Athenian political and social scene, was the particular ideological construction that contemporaries put on conflict.[34]

It is worth looking at this paragraph closely as it appears to reflect the fundamental weaknesses of the sum of work to date on youth. First, it frames all interaction as conflict, when a more nuanced view of 'opposition', I suggest, is more useful as a point from which to start the interrogation of concepts. Strauss correctly points out the changing political landscape, but in his work the construction of 'youth' seems merely subject to political forces, when demographic and social changes would most likely mean that constructions were both politically contingent and socially dynamic. But most critically, there is no solution given to what appears to be a hedging of bets, namely, that conflict is somehow inherent in father-son relationships but that literary representations have a fluidity based on external political or social factors. Something does not quite add up and the reader is left unsure of what Strauss thinks of literary representations of conflict, that is, whether they reflect a reality or not, or if they are somehow structured and structuring or even if they form part of a Gramscian cultural hegemony (the repeated use of the term 'ideology' by Strauss is highly problematic in this last sense). The opportunity is missed to examine closely how tragedy, like comedy, has 'a tendency both to reproduce and to rebel against existing Athenian

[34] p. 220.

political and cultural arrangements' and so reflect and confuse the material realities of youth in Greek society.[35] And at the heart of the matter is the fact that political changes in the late sixth century, introduced by Cleisthenes (see chapter II), had weakened vertical relationships in the family and strengthened horizontal ones between age groups, greatly increasing the sense of opposition between generational units, rather than between individual family members. The result of this change culminated in the factionalisation of Athenian politics by 413, in the period after Nicias and Alcibiades had presented political arguments explicitly framed by age. The problem remains that the nature of relationships between generations is still primarily considered by scholars in terms of interactions between individuals within families, most obviously in Strauss, whereas the real tensions between generational groups in contemporary society receive less attention. The problem appears to be in producing a unified view on how youths were considered both individually and collectively.

Perhaps the difficulty in resolving this problem is the reason why much of the contemporary work stayed more or less within the relatively uncontentious boundaries of historical fact-finding. Golden's work on children and childhood provides a case in point. Whilst it is an impressively erudite and comprehensive addition to our understanding of the behaviours and activities associated with children or young people, the political and socially dynamic aspect of youth is downplayed and appears only in passing. [36] This absence of either a focus on 'youth', or the term's socially

[35] Lape (2004, p.243) See also Hall (2006, p.93-126).

[36] Golden (pp.12-14) cites the dissonance that appears to be involved in attributing sometimes binary opposite qualities to young people and this does support the instability inherent in some social constructions. Chapter 3 also makes the distinction between children and young people and also introduces the subject of how fathers' political careers could be affected by a wayward son. But the essentially political nature of youth in tragedy is assumed and not interrogated (pp.51-79). Garland offers a similar partial view of youth, omitting the political. In

contingent use in literature is demonstrable in all existing research on adolescence in the ancient world.[37]

What is absent from all the work of Golden and others is a systematic interrogation of the theme of youth in tragedy, one that challenges the terms of reference such as 'generation gap' or 'intergenerational conflict' and evaluates rigorously the political nature of such themes against the backdrop of considerable political upheaval. The closest scholarship we have to fill this gap is to be found in Sommerstein's 'Problem Kids: young males and society from *Electra* to *Bacchae*.' In this regrettably short piece, Sommerstein suggests that, post 411, youth in tragedy are shown negatively because of the experience of the destruction of the Hermae and the subsequent upheaval of the oligarchic revolution. This line of argumentation has merit, but Sommerstein has little to say either on how tragedy responds to contemporary politics or the distance between the characterization of these 'problem kids' and normative views on youth in Athenian society. Most problematically, the chapter works from an anachronistic and predefined conception of anti-social youth (from an older male perspective), for which examples are subsequently sought.

Through the type of scholarship surveyed thus far, it is easy to believe that intergenerational relations have always been characterized negatively. And yet, through symposia, an idealized state of relations between young and old men (from an

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a section that, in many ways, sums up the weaknesses of work on youth to date, Garland argues Athens of the fifth century was a youth-centric culture; where youth were in the 'undoubted ascendancy' (p.206), but somehow in conflict with older men. He notes that those below thirty couldn't vote, but doesn't attempt to explain how this restriction might affect conflict, nor explain the apparent paradox of youth that are both excluded from the *Boule* and 'ascendant' (pp.203-6).

[37] *Coming of Age in Ancient Greece: Images of Childhood from the Ancient Past* (2003) by Neils & Oakley is a case in point. Of the 300 or so pages, only 3 are dedicated to 'youth'.

elite group, admittedly) was widely recognized. At these social events the older men would tutor the young in song, debate and drinking, effectively introducing them to a set of 'cultured' behaviours that the older generation thought necessary for the transition through to full adulthood of their aristocratic class. That these symposia continued throughout the most turbulent times of the Peloponnesian War demonstrates an underlying class-oriented distinction in attitudes towards youth. The young and aristocratic could find themselves encouraged into drunkenness at private parties, but when the same behaviour was relocated to the non-elite, or to outside private residences, riotousness through alcohol – barring public festivals - was not condoned by any class. In *Clouds*, Aristophanes provides an alternative, comic view of young people, when the working-class father Strepsiades denounces the sympotic activities of the elite and, condemning his son as lazy, demands that he be taught by a sophist, in order to become rich.[38] Attitudes towards young people are clearly defined, in part, by class expectations.

In summary, a synthesis has yet to be attempted that both builds on some of the work that has gone before and does not make assumptions about, paradoxically, both the universality and specificity of youth in classical Greece. To do this, use must be made of modern sociological, anthropological and psychoanalytic theory on the subject to help calibrate our analytical apparatus. This is not to privilege theory that will be anachronistically applied to readings of Greek tragedy, but to reveal the inherent contradictions that persist in social constructions of youth which, I shall argue, appear in all presentations of youth in democratic societies.[39]

[38] 1-125.

[39] That is, those societies that allow some plurality in cultural views. Introduction II offers evidence for much more rigid views on youth in pre- or non-democratic systems.

With terms such as 'generation gap' included in almost all of the classical works on youth in the ancient world it appears that contemporary notions of the place which youth occupies in the popular consciousness have repeatedly seeped into the discussion. Unsurprisingly, the first use by classical scholars of such terms followed the explosive emergence of what can be broadly classed as '… the conflict and change associated with the 1960s'.[40] In contrast to work by classicists, the systematic study of groups of youths by sociologists predates this watershed moment in the mid-twentieth century, negating the notion that the post-war generation pioneered the identification of cohesive youth identities. In particular, there was not only Granville Stanley Hall writing in 1904, but other seminal works of great contemporary relevance, such as Frederic Thrasher's groundbreaking sociological study *The Gang,* first published in 1927, that provide a point from which we can trace today's perspectives on youth within the framework of criminality.[41] It is on the subject of the 'youth gang' that this thesis will draw much inspiration, since for over almost a century it has been this concept that has proved the primary vehicle for negative popular social constructions of youth, conceptions that I shall argue were similarly articulated in Greek tragedy of the fifth century. The importance of some of these works and how they relate to the Classics is central to the investigation of how youths are presented in tragedy, and

[40] Kehily (2007, p.251).There are many who trace the rise of today's understanding of youth identities to 1950s America and indeed some, such as Jonathon Green writing in the 1960s, do point to the pre-1950s as a markedly different period. But it was in the 1960s when the beginnings of mass communications, in particular television, allowed the image of 'youth' to be refracted back into the gaze of youth themselves, allowing a degree of response and control of their public image. Of course, 1968 was a critical point of this decade when youth and politics combined explosively and provided the modern archetype for youthful militancy. For the decade's interactions between politics, youth and tragedy see Hall (2004, p.1-46) and Zeitlin (2004, pp.49-75) in Hall, Macintosh & Wrigley (eds.) (2004).

[41] The links between youth, especially seen as those in morally formative years, and criminality are well attested in post-industrial Europe. Regular 'moral panics' have been documented since the 1800s with groups of working class youths the target of moral outrage (regardless of the fact that the events that caused such outcries, penny theatres, gangster films, gangster rap or video games are all created by an adult industrial capability) Springhall (1998). Cohen's (1972) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* remains a seminal text on the subject.

offer some reasons why some scholars have sometimes been unable fully to grasp the dynamic nature of presentations of youth in tragedy. Thus, a brief introduction to the history and current debate in sociology on youth in conflict is required.

In recent times, the view that the youth of today do not respect their elders (and therefore betters) is a commonplace, reinforced by the willingness of society to view stories of an out-of-control younger generation as directly reflective of societal trends towards the breakdown of social restraint. Research shows that few of these perceptions are supported by evidence of actual changes in society.[42] Instead, such stories appear to demonstrate a kind of modern mythmaking, the modification or distortion of limited or minor events that enhance and enlarge an underlying tendency toward suspicion of those on the verge of adulthood. The current proliferation of sociological works on youth, gangs and crime is just the most recent indication of a sustained concern with how youth are integrated into society and reflect a specific political context.[43] However, this recent research does provide a voice for the young that is missing in the ancient sources. What emerges is a sense that opposition to adult values, thus the values of society at large, forms a part of the construction of group identity of young people. Correspondingly, adult definitions of youth as excluded and dangerous, regardless of their real social character, helps reinforce

[42] Very recent research goes so far as to suggest that older people actively seek out negative stories about young people, in order to positively reinforce their own age-group identity. Knobloch-Westerwick & Hastell (2010, p.515-35).

[43] Beginning with Thrasher, sociological interest in youth and conflict, most often rendered as 'gangs', has evolved through various phases in the 20th and 21st centuries, such as the still sometimes fashionable criminological focus, towards a culturally and politically nuanced view of the role of the place of youth in society (Katz & Jackson-Jacobs, 2004). Recent media coverage of murders of adolescents in UK has resulted in a new wave of interest in this subject, but now within a wider context of social exclusion and 'social mobility' (McAuley, 2007).

youth's own oppositional identity.[44] While the very existence of a gang may be a fantastical construction of a group by society, one that the adult world has helped create as an expression of their own anxiety about young people, the construction also helps to conceptualise the oppositional place these youths find themselves occupying in relation to the society from which they have yet to win adult acceptance. In this way unified political discourse is formed.[45] In this exchange, the social reality of the gang is subordinate to a broad social and political conceptualisation of the gang, in literature and the media, that helps articulate society's anxiety about relationships between younger and older generations. In the texts of classical Athens, we do not find the voice of youth, but rather the characterization assigned to them by an older generation. In modern times, the same could be said to be largely true, and when youth is allowed to express itself it is often within the parameters and expectations already set down by the older generation, creating a set of oppositions that modern research shows youth groups tend towards adopting.

In psychoanalytic theory, this view of a tacitly accepted opposition between young and old is most brilliantly drawn out by Donald Winnicott. Winnicott's view on youth is well summed up in a very short chapter in his work *Deprivation and Delinquency*, prefaced by an excellent quote from Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale,* which demonstrates a generalised, trans-historical and negative view of youth:

> I would there were no age between sixteen
> and twenty three or that youth would sleep out the
> rest; for there is nothing in between but
> getting wenches with child, wronging the ancientry,

[44] McDonald (2003, p.62-66).
[45] Katz & Jackson-Jacobs (2004).

stealing, fighting.[46]

Winnicott sees these activities as having some positive elements in allowing those in a liminal stage of personal development to act out impulses that they will then go on to master, eventually allowing them to identify with a society that attempts to hold and contain young people's anti-social behaviour. In the words of a commentator on Winnicott, Adrian Ward, a social work practitioner and academic: 'the point is for there to be a healthy and if necessary conflictual engagement, in which the strong feelings on both sides are expressed and perhaps acted out, but which can then often lead to some resolution through the renegotiation of relationships.'[47] Where there are negative portrayals of youth, apparently far more frequent in the ancient world than positive ones, Winnicott suggests that these are generated because: 'Infinite potential is youth's precious and fleeting possession. This generates envy in the adult who is discovering in his own living the limitations of the actual.'[48] As social scientists, these writers would not ascribe a universality to this social analysis of youth. But the paradoxical view of youth expressed by adults that both envies and condemns youthful exuberance echoes across the centuries and certainly appears consistent with presentations in tragedy. It could well be that this paradoxical view is one that allows the relationship between generations to remain oppositional without negating the ability of the younger generation to eventually integrate socially and politically with wider society. And contained within this paradox are very well known ancient views on youth that express admiration of their physicality whilst criticising their psychology, as I shall demonstrate.

[46] From *A Winter's Tale* III. Iii. 58 -62. Winnicott (2000, p.156).
[47] Ward (2012, p.130).
[48] Ibid: pp. 157-8.

Returning to sociology, Frederic Thrasher, writing in the 1920s, was the first to undertake a large scale and rigorous survey of youth gangs and what can be loosely termed 'gang culture'. Remarkably sympathetic to groups of youths, and the circumstances in which they form '… a rudimentary society with a constructive tendency',[49] rather than a purely criminal or delinquent enterprise, Thrasher shared the same view of more recent sociologists, even criminologists, that the perceived formation of gangs is largely in response to a society that has '… failed to provide organized and supervised activities adequate to absorb his interests and exhaust his energies.'[50] This view is not too dissimilar to Forrest's perception of the motivations behind the oligarchic tendencies of Alcibiades and others. Interestingly, this definition of causal factors omits mention of social status other than an implicit sense of social exclusion that is not qualified by economic class. In a strikingly similar passage, Bertman discusses the concept of intergenerational conflict in the ancient world, and states: 'In the first half of the fourth century BCE their [youth's] scorn for their elders took the form of rejecting integration into the political and social institutions of their elders. Instead the energies of the educated and affluent youth were channeled into degenerate practices: dissipation of all sorts, debauchery, drinking, squandering wealth and general idleness.'[51] Such descriptions could well be applied to 'gangs' at all times in history and Bertman offers other examples of descriptions of youth and what could be considered youth gangs that have contemporary resonance: Aristotle describes the shortsighted, honour-obsessed nature of youth,[52] and Isocrates offers a damning speech on youth's role in the decline of democracy (the political) and

[49] p.251.
[50] Ibid, p.251.
[51] 1976, p.38.
[52] Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.12.3-14.

morality (the social), albeit caused by an indulgent older generation.[53] With social constructions in mind, such judgments leave the overriding impression of youth negatively cast by those who have the economic, social, political and cultural power in society, that is, the adult elites. But it must be remembered that it is also the offspring of the elite who appear to be castigated, as discussed above, in relation to the term 'generation'.

Thrasher's 'gangs' are also engaged in adventurous activities that have a fertile myth-generating capacity. There is a remarkable correspondence between the types of experience Thrasher finds in gang life and the kinds of stories we find in mythology. It is worth quoting Thrasher more fully on his view of what a gang is in terms of experience:

> Here are comedy and tragedy… here is melodrama which excels the recurrent thrillers at the downtown theatres. Here are unvarnished emotions. Here also is a primitive democracy that cuts through all the conventional social and racial discriminations. The gang, in short, is life, often rough and untamed, yet rich in elemental processes significant to the structure of society and human nature.[54]

Using broad definitions, Thrasher sets out what he sees as the typical gang experiences including: quests for new experiences, entertainment through cultural pursuits, romantic mythmaking about the group, construction and defence of group territory,

[53] Isoc. *Areopagiticus,* 49-51. Note that these atavistic views are very similar to ones in archaic literature, both belonging to historical periods when full democracy was absent. That is, the periods before the reforms of Ephialtes and after the Athenian defeat in the Peloponnesian War.
[54] p.3.

economic endeavours, wanderlust,[55] gang warfare, the establishment of identity through gang membership and initiation, and sexual intrigues. These types correspond well with the plotlines of myth. It is not the purpose of this thesis to map gang experiences on to the development of stories in society but it is noteworthy that gangs appear to be used both by the viewer and the participant as a way of creating a mythology, as a social construction that reinforces identities via storytelling. Later discussion in this thesis will aim to show that formation of such ideas about youth gangs is not new, that in fact Greek tragedy offers multiple examples of the construction of identities that correspond with Thrasher's experiences of youth gangs. The key is not to follow, what I believe to be, the mistakes of recent sociology (and criminology specifically, as discussed below) in concentrating on gang composition, structure and criminal activities but to consider gang experiences as a way to penetrate through the fabric out of which youth gangs are socially constructed. (To my knowledge, only one piece of classical scholarship has been published to date on gangs and the classical, Fuch's *The Greek Gang at Troy* (1993), in which crucial errors are included as in some recent sociology, with all gang experience framed within the context of organized crime and illegal entrepreneurial activity, reflective, perhaps, of a cultural context that places an economic value on all social activity).

In sharp contrast to this pioneering work by the Thrasher, and the Chicago School of which he was a part,[56] the subsequent explosion of criminology and correlated research priorities has firmly placed emphasis on the deviancy and cost to society of

[55] Interestingly, a popular song of the gangs was 'Big Rock Candy Mountain', a hobo song of travel to a utopia of whiskey lakes and endless pots of stew, that was used as a motif for travel in the Cohen Brothers' 'O Brother where art thou?' roughly based on the *Odyssey*.
[56] See Bulmer (1984) for the innovation of an ecological approach to sociological fieldwork, by which the Chicago School won its renown. Thrasher's legacy is demonstrated in the other great early twentieth-century work on gangs, Whyte's (1943) *Street Corner Society*.

youth gangs. The overwhelming majority of discussion is on what social or economic factors have created the gangs of young (mainly ethnic minority) men who pose a threat to themselves and society at large. Fortunately, dissenting voices can be heard and the critical survey by Katz and Jackson-Jacobs[57] reveals the extent to which political or cultural trends had distorted many academics' research basis. As Jackson-Jacobs neatly summarizes the problem, a supposedly objective frame can be misleading: 'windows can be dangerous tools, hiding what is on the other side by fascinating the viewer with nothing more than a reflection of the gazing perspective.'[58] The viewer of Greek tragedy needs similarly to be warned to step back from attempting to form opinions about the gang (or crowd, as I shall discuss shortly) in ancient society, and to look instead at what formulations of a potentially mythical crowd or gang have been created by the tragedian. Katz and Jackson-Jacobs go on to highlight another major historical failing of researchers into gangs and this is the neglect of contextualising the group within the wider social milieu. Again, their warnings remind us to be careful in our consideration of social construction, since often the constructions are created for, rather than by, those who are considered as defined in these constructions.

Such arguments have been played out in an almost directly parallel manner in Sociology when research has been carried out on the notion of crowds. The various conceptualisations of 'the crowd' have been given some familiar treatments over the last century but have an earlier scholarly history than research into youth gangs. Importantly, crowds have occupied a similar psychological space in popular culture as youth groups: often accepted; often feared; perceived to be composed of individuals

[57] The provocatively titled: *The Criminologist's Gang* (2003).
[58] Ibid: p.99.

who become somewhat faceless; and used as a place onto which anxieties about society appear to be projected. Unlike the concept of the youth gang, crowds have been relatively well studied by classicists (perhaps because ochlocracy was already a concept in political theory from Plato onwards)[59] and an overview of the sociological theory base and its application within Classics should highlight points of commonality between ways of approaching crowds and youth groups that will help us to become more theoretically sophisticated about the latter. It is the group within its social context that will be investigated. It can be no other way with tragedy forming a central part of the social life of the *polis,* such as through tragedy's place in major Athenian festivals.

One of the most influential twentieth-century works on crowds, Canetti's 1962 *Crowds and Power*, acts as a starting point. Canetti's broad-based and poetic discourse on crowds marked a point at which global interest in popular mass movements, including those specific to youth, and the application of political ideologies to collective psychologies was at its Cold War apex. Later to be criticized for the 'resonances' it suggested, instead of arguing from any discernible empirical basis, the grand sweep of Canetti's narrative won him a Nobel Prize. The opening lines summarise Canetti's approach, mixing the primal motivations of mankind with a nascent conception of otherness: 'There is nothing that man fears more than the touch of the unknown … it is only in a crowd that a man can become free of his fear of being touched.'[60] This statement can be read metaphorically, that is, as meaning that it is the fear of being touched emotionally, as well as physically, that is to be feared. The unmediated impact

[59] Pl. *Rep*. book 8, 565e. McClelland (1989: 34-59) devotes a chapter to the crowd in the ancient world, as a concept which emerged from Plato's *Republic*.
[60] p.1.

of the horror of existence is too much to bear alone. The audience sitting down to Greek tragedy may have taken some comfort in their anticipation, as a group, of the emotional journey ahead, a journey that they could endure as co-residents of a city state rather than as individuals.

Thirty years later, and following the end of the Cold War and an easing in the popular interest in crowds as political entities, McPhail, published *The Myth of the Madding Crowd* (1991) just after the waves of pro-capitalist revolutions had swept through Eastern Europe. McPhail launched a determined attack on the past century of studies of crowds based on political ideologies and heralded a new era in Anthropology that gave primacy to empiricism over 'armchair theories'. McPhail traced contemporary attitudes back to the 'crowd as mob' to Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931), whose writings on the 'manipulated mob' he takes as imbued with a deep anti-revolutionary ideology instead of being extracted from careful observation of crowds.[61]

Classicists have shown some limited interest in the question of the anonymous, or rather, under-developed group presented to us in the sources. However, on the rare occasion when crowd definition and composition are considered, more questions than answers are raised. Hunter discussed an interesting section of chapter 8 (chapter 3) of Thucydides involving a crowd of lower-ranking sailors. She identifies significant problems regarding the seemingly interchangeable narratorial use of *ochlos* and *homilos* by Thucydides when, by contrast, in his speeches the terms appear to be used

[61] McClelland also points to the enduring, corrosive influence of Le Bon, but as part of a wider political narrative, including Livy's *The Early History of Rome,* of the mob nature of crowds (pp. 46-50). However, some theoretical demarcation is necessary here: Le Bon's view, and those of others, may have been empirically suspect, but they have reflected negatively charged popular conceptions. Le Bon and Freud's critique of his view of the crowd is discussed in detail in chapter 8 on *Bacchae*.

to categorise the types of crowd according to contingent social circumstances.[62] The sailors, referred to as *ochlos* but described as acting rationally are presented positively. And yet when their emotions rise the term 'mob', i.e. *ochlos*, is considered appropriate. Alcibiades uses *ochlos* to refer to a 'mob' or otherwise unfavourably defined groups of rank and file soldiers, whereas *homilos* is more generally used by him for assembly gatherings that include the aristocratic elite. The two terms, then, do seem sometimes to have connotations to do with class, but not invariably so. More importantly, it is the world mediated via Thucydides that we see, and so language is not independent of the author. Fortunately, Hunter does go on to identify the ideological bias in Thucydides as a precursor to Le Bon's anti-revolutionary categorization of the crowd as an emotional agent of social disintegration, and she concludes by supporting the use of sociological means to better understand the milieux in which groups or crowds can be formed. However, the result is to leave uncertainty as to the wider meaning of terms such as *ochlos* that is outside of a particular use by Thucydides and in particular in relation to specific types of crowds, of which there can be very many. Perhaps little more is revealed than that Thucydides may have held reactionary views placing value on a mythical orderly golden era that promoted 'moderation and [held] resentment and fear of popular anger and protest.'[63] This may be true, but little remains then of understanding the popular appreciation of crowds, groups and collectives. Greek tragedy will clearly also be affected by the particular views held by the tragedians and *chorēgoi*, even if these views are inaccessible to us. But the medium of tragedy was unquestionably more popular than historical texts available only to a small elite and so such terms (*ochlos, homilos*) in the plays offer views of crowds that may have resonated with the greater mass of society

[62] *Classical Journal* 84 (1988, pp.17-30). See *Thu*. 72-82
[63] p.27.

at the time. Regardless of the truth of this proposition, this brief example of the philological problems associated with defining terms and concepts provides further support for a method which looks for the use of general conceptions rather than specific terms in the analysis of youth in tragedy.

Elsewhere in classical scholarship on the subject of crowds or gangs, on the rare occasion 'the crowd' is brought into discussion, it is with little thought as to the real meaning of this categorization. The influence of Max Weber looms large in the social stratifications that classicists tend to use without proper interrogation of the cultural meanings behind different terms. Thus, Fergus Millar in his *The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic* (1998) equates the crowd with the *populus Romanus*, a category of people who can be defined by their '... assembling in the Forum, listening to orations there, and responding to them, sometimes engaging in violence aimed at physical control of their public spaces; and dividing into their thirty five voting groups to vote on laws.'[64] This approach to definition is largely driven by the use of contemporary historical and oratorical sources. When Millar deploys Polybius' observations on the structure of Roman political mechanisms it is clear, again, that Polybius' correlation of 'the people' in Latin and the '*dēmos*' (since he is writing in Greek) is taken as a simple rendering from Latin into Greek. But Polybius was commenting on the role of those excluded from processes such as the *comitia centuriata* on the basis of their relative poverty. Millar correctly observes that Polybius does not identify the differences between the different *comitia* but fails to engage with the larger issue of what exactly belonging to the '*dēmos*' means if it is in the same category as crowd. Perhaps the economic stratification of society in Rome makes this issue easily avoidable, but if a

[64] p.1.

major work is to be focused on 'the crowd' it is important to define what the terminology means and how it can be used. Millar's definition above, by associating the crowd with space, manipulation by public speakers and a tendency towards violence, suggests that the term 'crowd' is used not just to mean the non-elite people, but to allocate them a certain psychology, that is, the psychology of the mob. The issue to disentangle is whether this view is supported by methodological or ideological traditions within Classics, or the individual classicist, or whether similar consistent presentations are made in the ancient sources and are taken at face value (I will show that they are, and extensively) and are not properly identified as such, such as in Millar's discussion. A case in point is the use of Cicero's *Verr*. 1.18/54 to demonstrate the importance of extended citizenship. When Cicero exclaims, 'I will not let it happen that this case might be decided only then, when this great crowd (*frequentia*) from all over Italy has departed from Rome.', there is no discussion of why *frequentia* has been translated as 'crowd' in the context of a large number of poor provincials, when the term can simply means a large gathering of individuals. Tellingly, the socially contingent use of the term 'crowd' is put beyond doubt when Millar later comments on Cicero's views of the role of the *populus Romanus* in the political system of Rome: 'He must also be right in his implied contrast between the respectable voters who could make the journey to Rome from a distance and the more lower-class character of the crowd that could be rapidly assembled in the Forum.'[65] Millar here very nearly says that the crowd is a word used to describe the lower class urban poor. In summary, Millar's work is very careful and detailed in its investigation of exhortations to the *populus Romanus*, consideration of where large bodies of individuals met and analysis

[65] p.38. Interestingly, modern scholarship on youth gangs also places emphasis on their inhabitancy of public spaces. Indeed, the very latest research claims that a youth 'gang' can only be so categorised if its activities are mainly in public spaces (Medina et al., 2013). The class bias here cannot be more obvious. See chapter 7 on class identity in groups.

of what role those at the bottom end of the economic stratification played in political decision-making. In this respect it fits neatly into the Weberian methodology of status categorization, in common with most classicists' work on ancient societies. And yet, the fundamental use of terms to describe people of difference classes, both by the scholar and in the sources, is not reflected upon when this discussion is central to the real relations within society and thus the actual ancient perceptions of 'the crowd', rather than a mechanistic categorization that ignores the political in Cicero's politics. As has been discussed in relation to scholars of ancient Greek society, the social construction itself is unbreached.

Just as issues to do with youth look to have been considered a temporal constant, work has been undertaken to try to show how there is also a cross-cultural consistency in attitudes to youth. The similarities in cosmologies between Greece and Mesopotamia, for example, are increasingly being used to demonstrate how trade, migration and colonisation, war and occupation and other contacts would have helped to increase the capacity for cross-cultural transmission throughout the region. [66] The weight of scholarly evidence is compelling but there is reason to continue to assess such links carefully.[67] Harris, for example,[68] points out the obvious parallels such as between the Babylonian genesis myth *Enuma Elish* or the *Theogony of Dunnu* and Hesiod's stories of conflict between gods, but chooses the type of myth, genesis, that tends to contain similar features in cultures across the world, some of which will

[66] See West (1999), for the fullest summary of similarities between tragedy and Western Asian literature and transmission, and Haubold (2013) for the latest scholarship on this subject.
[67] There are dangers in drawing conclusions simply from the textual record, such as the once widely held belief that *Bacchae* offered proof that Dionysus was a late import to the pantheon, only for Linear B discoveries to show the god's existence in the Greek consciousness 1,000 years earlier than once thought. Seaford (2006, pp.35-6).
[68] 1992, pp.621-35.

certainly not have had contact.[69] Here, the interpenetrations between the different cosmologies appear various and convincing. Also persuasive are the similarities she shows in, for example, Sumerian expectations of young men (aggressively competitive and ambitious but respectful and deferential to their elders) or Assyrian common utterances about the curse of disrespectful sons with similar sentiments in Greece. To recapitulate, the myths of succession, the language and concepts used and the view of social concerns offer a picture of an intercultural regional anxiety about potential for conflict between generations played out in cosmological myths that project these anxieties onto the divine plane. Harris' final conclusion (that the dramatic projection allows these societies to remain basically gerontocratic, by supporting a kind of wish fulfillment for the younger generations) is bold but her argument is simplistic. It would require a self-conscious and highly deterministic myth tradition that doesn't take into account the large temporal space over which this controlling mechanism would have to have survived, given the persistence of myths concerned with intergenerational conflict through the Bronze Age and into the archaic and classical periods. Indeed, it was only with the advent of Christian religious hegemony in Europe and Islam or Judaism in the Near East that the essentially conflicted nature of genesis myths began to become eroded.[70]

All the similarities in attitudes to youth introduced so far, transcending temporalities and cultures, appear to form a consistent backdrop of anxiety about the period of

[69] The genesis myths of South America are strikingly similar to those of ancient Mediterranean cultures, for example. From Frazer (1900) onwards, discussion has been fierce amongst anthropologists as to the universality of specificity of societies' structure as transmitted in myth, though regrettably this subject far too broad for this thesis.

[70] See also Vasunia (2012, pp.183-99) for the level of critical sophistication required to properly understand the influence of both the precise originating milieu and the responsiveness to cultural plurality in ancient literature.

transition from child to adult. The extensive work already carried out in both Sociology/Anthropology and Classics has already demonstrated how such anxieties are clearly evident in classical Greek literature. The universality of anxiety about youth is beyond doubt. Instead, it is the specific presentation of themes of youth, their treatment and modification in fifth-century Greek tragedy that will form the focus of this thesis—that is, the social construction of the period of transition as presented in tragedy. No apology will be given for what may be considered the blatant Athenocentrism of this thesis' focus. I believe that a special case can be made for Athens of the period, not least on the basis of the rich evidence available in the three great Attic tragedians, for which there is no parallel from other Greek cities at the same moment in history.

With the role of youth and anxiety about this group in mind, I now turn to the plays of the fifth century for a brief review of the potential for investigating social constructions of youth. Of Aeschylus' extant plays there are significant aspects of intergenerational conflict in all. In *Persae*, the ghost of Darius blames his people's defeat by the Greeks on the youthful folly of Xerxes. [71] In *Seven against Thebes*, Oedipus' intergenerational transgressions loom over the action, [72] along with Eteocles' and Polynices' stubborn determination to kill each other in violation of their father's wishes.[73] *Suppliants* involves the conflict of two authorities, the older Greek Danaus and Pelasgus and the younger foreign sons of Aegyptus.[74] And of course, the *Oresteia* abounds in examples of intergenerational conflict, from Orestes' murder of Clytemnestra to the conflict over authority between the younger Olympian Athena and the older chthonic generation of

[71] Aesch. *Per*. 780-5.
[72] Aesch. *Sep*. 741-55.
[73] Aesch. *Sep*. 874-80.
[74] Aesch. *Supp*. 176-8.

the Erinyes. Relations between parents and children are also shown to be problematic in many of Sophocles' and Euripides' works. Of Sophocles' extant plays, the tragedies set in Thebes most obviously contain the intergenerational conflict theme and the tension between authority and independence is predominant in *Philoctetes* and *Electra*. Even though we have inherited a larger proportion of Euripides' works, the theme still appears consistently as part of the plot, most clearly in *Medea, Heraclidae, Hippolytus, Electra, Phoenician Women, Orestes* and *Bacchae.* However, in one play in particular, the Aeschylean *Prometheus*,[75] the conflict between generations provides not only the mythic backdrop of the drama but also the core around which all interactions take shape, and the theme permeates almost all speech. And ultimately, if we consider the possible resolutions to what seems to have been a trilogy about Prometheus, it must have involved yet more confrontation between youth and adults. The central relationship of the Aeschylean play, between Zeus and Prometheus, is placed within a wider set of relationships between the gods, the titans and mortals whose intergenerational transactions are brought to the fore. The play offers the opportunity to look closely at the real and metaphorical struggles that the author presents to his audience. Thus, *Prometheus* will provide me with a first attempt to understand generational opposition in tragedy.

To make explicit the thesis structure, in each chapter a play will be examined in the attempt to identify the traces of social constructions of youth from Greek society. While no direct links will be attempted between themes and the precise details of real

[75] Certainly, there remains doubt as to the authorship of this play, but for present purposes the play is considered broadly as a product of the Athenian imagination and representative of fifth-century cultural thought, of which Aeschylus was a part. Scholarly opinion on authorship of the play is traceable through Thomson (1932, pp.1-5), Taplin (1977, pp.460-9), Griffiths (1983, pp. 31-35), Podlecki (2005, pp.195-200) and Hall (2009, p.230). For full discussion on *Prometheus* see Chapter 3 below.

events, such as has been suggested for *Troades,*[76] a careful assessment will take place of whether the general shift through the century from relative political stability to war, revolution and counter-revolution in some way affected the nature of the social construction of youth. So for example, in the chapter on *Prometheus*, reference will be made to the legendary Athenian tyrant-slayers as an example of how the current political discourse resulted in a modified cultural memory of an event to match society's attitudes towards youth, loyalty and forms of government. And both *Orestes* and *Bacchae* will receive dedicated chapters in which it will be questioned whether the turmoil of the oligarchic revolution of 411, and subsequent stasis in Athens, affected Euripides' presentation of youth. Analysis of *Heraclidae, Philoctetes* and *Antigone* will also aim to demonstrate the variety and flexibility of social constructions. It is hoped that the result will be a comprehensive view of how youth is presented in tragedy, in what way this is a social construction and how this might have changed from the earliest surviving full tragedies of Aeschylus' first plays to the final productions of Euripides and Sophocles as the great democracy of Athens finally unravelled. Discussion will conclude with some suggestions on the further research required to address some of the deficiencies in Classics scholarship relating to youth, as well as an appeal for the creation of a formal strands of 'youth studies' within Classics.

[76] See Cartledge (1997, pp.21-2) for example. It does seem to be *Troades* and Euripides' *Orestes* that attracts these attempts at historical referentiality most frequently. In the subsequent chapter on *Orestes* this tendency will be discussed in more detail.

Chapter 2

Introduction Part II:

Youth in Non-Tragic Sources

A central postulation of this thesis is that tragedy was the ultimate mass cultural expression of political issues in fifth-century Athenian society and, as such, the treatment of youth and generational relations in tragedy is different from that in other genres that were accessible to a different, much smaller audience. Furthermore, other Greek historical periods with variations in their socio-historic and political climate, as well as differing generic conventions, offer quite different, and I argue, much more atavistic views on youth. To support this argument a review of how youth has been treated in other textual evidence from the fifth century and before is required. This chapter will consider how youth is presented in archaic literature, in the writings of those thinkers whom we now call the pre-Socratics and the Sophists, and in the historical texts of Thucydides and Herodotus. A final section will be used to review youth in extra-textual sources.

While tragedy became the dominant cultural form in the fifth century, the popularity of archaic literature also remained strong. The works of Homer and Hesiod predate even the earliest tragedy by at least a clear two centuries and were composed within a very different political context, but they were intimately known by all Greeks and feature many of the characters and plotlines that the tragedians would later use in their works. The Homeric epics were performed regularly at the Athenian Panathenaia. While the study of the complex relationships between tragedy and archaic literature is

outside the scope of this thesis, a brief review of the handling of youth in Homer and Hesiod is essential as a point of comparison. The following discussion will help to construct the traditional picture of youth that the Greek tragedians inherited and from which, I will argue, tragedy was later to depart. While fuller discussion of the political in the *Odyssey* or the *Theogony* will be revisited in later chapters, the focus at this point will be on the most visible treatment of youth in the major works of literature that pre-dated tragedy and represent cultural formulations of the mythic tradition from which the tragedians would later draw.

Beginning with Homer, the view of youth that emerges from the *Iliad* is a complex one. It is clear that the majority of the Greek army is made up of young men, but a very small number are given a voice. That the army seems to be mainly comprised of young men is continuously reiterated, those involved in the prayers to Apollo specifically referred to as 'youths' (*kouroi*).[77] Again, later, when Hector is in the ascendant he is described as decimating the young (*neōn*) phalanx,[78] and Poseidon, too, addresses the Greeks as *kouroi.*[79] With the exception of Diomedes, who acknowledges his youth and therefore inferior status,[80] the voice of the dominant Greeks is the voice of the older commanders: Agamemnon, Odysseus, Menelaus and Nestor. Arrangements on the Trojan side are slightly different, since Priam is still constitutional monarch of Troy, while Hector is in charge of military operations. But neither of them is a youth and both have achieved paternity themselves. There is no discernible difference between the way that relationships between generations are constructed on the Greek and on the Trojan sides.

[77] *Il.*1.473.
[78] 11.503.
[79] 13.95.
[80] 14.111, see below.

The most cursory reading of the epic reveals obsessive reiterations of personal genealogies. Almost all characters are introduced via their parentage. While this seems to demonstrate the importance of an individual's place within a family's generational context, it is also used to reflect on the honour (or in some cases dishonour) of a character in relation to their forebears. The clearest example of this is demonstrated by Aeneas' speech in book 20, regaling Achilles with an account of his lineage.[81] This in turn adds a degree of characterisation in a narrative where individuals come and go at an accelerated pace. Individual characterisations are linked to stories of honourable achievements, a feature typical of epic, rather than psychological traits. The value of family, such as is poetically woven into the story of Agamemnon's scepter,[82] is seemingly at odds, however, with the reality of the Greek army's circumstances. As Agamemnon points out, 'nine of great Zeus' years have now passed…our wives and little children sit at home and wait for us.' [83] Or not such little children as the case may be, startlingly so in that of Telemachus in the *Odyssey* or Orestes (of whom more later). The importance of family is more accurately described as the importance of an individual's place within the male generations - but even this appears subordinate to the pursuit of *kleos*. Hector relates his reasons for leading the battle lines to Andromache: not just to win and save Troy, but to win glory for himself, and for his father.[84] Hector also sets out his aspirations for his son Astyanax: [85] to win greater honour than he has done. The link between the honour of fathers and sons is shown in

[81] 20.200-59.
[82] 2.100-8.
[83] 2.131-3.
[84] 6.438.
[85] 6.480.

reverse by Agamemnon's taunt of Peisander and Hippolochus before he strikes them down: 'You shall now pay for your father's disgraceful insult.' [86]

So, while there are many references to the eagerness for a return to family or the lamentations of fathers for their fallen sons, many of the speeches suggest these are actually secondary considerations. The speeches of the older characters appear to support, in brutal contrast, the primacy of honour over the survival of their young kin. Nestor, in particular, as the voice of the older Greek generation at Troy, consistently exhorts the young warriors to battle. Strengthening this paternal autocracy is the reference to age and authority that tends to feature in Nestor's speeches. At 1.249-251, Nestor's intervention in the argument between Agamemnon and Achilles fails to achieve reconciliation between them, but his paternalism is immediately established ('He had already seen two generations of men born … He had their interests at heart …')[87] and he quickly moves to establish his generational status: 'Now listen to me. You are both my juniors.'[88]'Godlike' Achilles, responding to Nestor's entreaties in hardly a godlike way, complains: 'a pathetic little nonentity I shall be called …',[89] leaving the impression of a debate between a self-indulgent younger man and a calm and rational older man.[90] Indeed, throughout, Nestor is the voice of age and reason, intervening between Diomedes and Agamemnon, and in book 9, asserting that, as an older man,

[86] 11.141.
[87] This phrase is repeated at 2.79 and 7.328 and 9.93 and is also used to describe Odysseus at 2.281 and Priam at 7.368 and Thoas at 15.281, all older leaders.
[88] 1.260.
[89] 1.293.
[90] MacCary (1982) argues for the presentation of an immature Achilles in the *Iliad*, as consistent with a literary mirror to a society in which young/*erga* and old/*logos* were natural binaries. Both Gottesman (2008, p.1) and Lloyd (2004) identify widespread use of '*kertomia'* by Achilles, a form of speech that is associated with young men.

he can '… take the whole situation into consideration …',[91] implying the rashness and lack of foresight of the young and the ability to give good counsel that comes with age. These exchanges, however, do not actually involve conflict between generations but reflect a theme of entrenchment of societal status of different age groups and the importance of deferment to older men. Agamemnon, after hearing fairly sharp criticism of his actions by Nestor, concedes his 'lamentable impulse and … blind folly'.[92] That is not to say that all of the older generation are allowed authority over the young, since Phoenix fails to persuade Achilles to fight for the Greeks. But this failure can also be attributed to Achilles' absolute implacability and the fact that Phoenix is just a symbolic surrogate for generational authority. Achilles, once the humiliation of his loss of Briseis is complete, provides further negative reinforcement of the characterization of youth, bursting into tears and demanding that Thetis, his mother, should help him get revenge.[93] Specific criticism of characteristics of youth are presented elsewhere. Menelaus, in book 3, proclaims that: '… the youngest men *(hoploterōs)* are never dependable …',[94] and asks that Priam swears an oath in place of Paris, in whom he has little trust. This judgment of youth goes uncontested and appears to be presented as a matter of fact.

The precedence of age is asserted on the divine plane, too, as Hera argues '… I take precedence in two respects – (firstly) because I am the eldest by birth …',[95] and Zeus often iterates his authority as 'senior by birth'.[96] 'The privilege of age',[97] as Nestor later

[91] 9.60.
[92] 9.119.
[93] 1.353-413.
[94] 3.108.
[95] 4.60.
[96] 15.181, 15.198.
[97] 4.324.

calls it, is apparently unassailable. This is the privilege of directing the actions, and in some cases deciding the fates, of other, younger men. This privilege is quickly and brutally demonstrated when the youthfulness of one of the first to die, Simoisius, is set out in the description of the first clashes between Greek and Trojans.[98] Later, in book 7, it is again Nestor who urges the Greeks to nominate a champion to take on Hector[99] and it is Nestor who advises Menoetius to enter negotiations as while, 'Achilles is of nobler birth than you … you are older than he is.'[100] Odysseus also invokes age and authority over Achilles when he says that, '… my judgment is much sounder than yours',[101] and Menelaus also uses age as a condition for subordination when he says, 'we have nobody younger (*neōteros*) than you, Antilochus … why not race out and see if you can bring a Trojan down.'[102] These passages reiterate two key aspects of youth, first that they should be subordinate to their elders, and secondly that it is their place to face death, their rash nature being naturally suited to this role. The younger appear to share this view of the rightful allocation of authority, Diomedes apologizing for disagreeing with Agamemnon's views, requesting that he does not 'resent the fact that I am the youngest man among you.'[103] The gods' honour and age shape individual actions as much as mortals. Poseidon, challenging Apollo, says, 'You are my junior, and with my greater age and experience, it would not be honourable for me to start.'[104] The younger men appear entirely supportive of the notion of the authority of age, Pandarus regretful of his failure to heed his father's advice on battle strategy.[105]

[98] 4.472-89.
[99] 7.122-60.
[100] 11.788.
[101] 19.219.
[102] 15.569-70.
[103] 14.111.
[104] 21.440.
[105] 5.200-3.

Zeus, like the mortal Nestor, is an explicitly paternal figure, unquestionably authoritarian. What is true is that there is more dissent between the generations of gods than exists on the mortal plane. Zeus is introduced as 'Zeus son of Cronos',[106] an epithet that is used again at 1.529 and a good number of other times throughout the *Iliad*. This places Zeus within the framework of generations, as father of many ('… the whole company of gods rose … in their father's presence'),[107] son of one, and thus occupying a position of authority as neither too old nor too young. The reiteration of Zeus' lineage also acknowledges his paternity but little mention is made within the *Iliad* of the myth of his overthrow of Cronos.[108] Interestingly, this epithet is modified in book 2 when Zeus is referred to as 'son of sickle-wielding Cronos',[109] in a clear reference to the myth of Cronos' castration of his father, Ouranos.

Sustaining these generational relationships is the desire to win honour in the eyes of the older generation: this is the endeavour with which the assembled young men appear to be primarily concerned. Diomedes, when injured, appeals to Athene who fills him with the courage of his father;[110] on tiring from his exertions, Diomedes is then *unfavourably* compared to his father and grandfather for refusing to carry the fight to Ares.[111] Comparison with one's father is not always unfavourable though, and Periphetes is considered 'a better son in all respects …' than his father Copreus.[112] And

[106] 1.502.
[107] 1.535.
[108] Although at 5.888 Zeus does make reference to his defeat of the Titans. Oddly, at 8.480, he does threaten the Olympians with suffering the fate of Iapetus and Cronos without reference to genealogy. It is also true that Aphrodite makes reference to Cronos' imprisonment, but without placing a value judgment on the episode, 14.205.
[109] 2.205 and again at 2.319.
[110] 5.115-31.
[111] 5.800-13.
[112] 15.642.

Teucer is encouraged to win glory for his father Telamon.[113] On the divine plane criticism is made when Zeus berates Ares for his bloodlust.[114] The language used by Zeus, 'don't come whining to me', formulates a picture of Ares as childlike and lacking composure.[115]

The young warriors appear respectfully subordinate to the older generation, the senior members of the military community who encourage them to compete for honour before sending them into battle. A high value is placed on personal relationships, such as between fathers and sons, but not so high as the *kleos* gained from death in battle. Characteristics that appear to be associated with youth are both negative (the perceived psychology of youth) and positive (physical prowess). The overall impression is of a society in which the young and the old have well embedded positions of power in relation to each other. Tensions in these relationships are both revealed and resolved through competition for honour. There is plenty of intergenerational competition, but little intergeneration conflict.

If the *Iliad* offers an insight into the anxieties and pressures of men at war, the *Odyssey* reflects on the lives of those left behind awaiting their fathers' return. It offers part travelogue, part imagined reality of a world without a ruling-age male population. From the beginning of Book 1, it is made clear that the gang of suitors threatening Odysseus' legacy, and that of his son, Telemachus, are young men.[116] In line with the general view of youth, as described in the *Iliad*, these young suitors are predictably

[113] 8.282-5.
[114] 5.889-98.
[115] 5.889.
[116] *Od*. 1.158.

insolent and arrogant.[117] Telemachus' status as an extremely young man appears negatively reflected in others' perceptions of him, too: Antinous admonishes him for his 'bold and haughty way of talking'.[118]

The situation at Ithaca is clear when, in book 2, the elderly Aegyptius asks: 'who has summoned us now? Was it one of the young men (*neōn andrōn*) or one of the older generation (*progenesteroi*)?'[119] Ithaca is a land without a middle-range adult male population: women aside, there are just the old, young men and children. The resultant society appears to be one in which social control of the young has broken down. 'There is no one like Odysseus in charge'[120] to stop the young men exploiting Telemachus' lack of political power - and thus ability to inflict violence on those who would be Penelope's new husband. The term *kouroi* is used repeatedly to refer to the suitors, making their ages relative to Odysseus clear. [121]

While the suitors' youth is presented in a negative light, the general view of youth offered does not do the younger generation much credit either. Athena proclaims: 'Few sons are like their fathers. Generally they are worse.' [122] In a curious passage, in book 10, Odysseus repeats the story of Elpenor, the youngest of his party, who dies an unnecessary death due, it seems, to pure absent-mindedness. However, the reference

[117] 2.324, 2.332.
[118] 1.385. It is always a hazardous task to try and estimate ages of fictional characters but Menelaus' speech at 4.113 suggests that Telemachus must be around 20 years old. At 4.669, Antinous suggests that has not yet reached manhood, and Odysseus's dog is referred to as having aged twenty years since Odysseus left Ithaca (17.328), having been born around the same time as Telemachus.
[119] 2.28-9.
[120] 2.59.
[121] 16.248, 17.174.
[122] 2.276.

to his young age, made twice in two lines,[123] suggests that his lack of judgment is a result of youthful intellectual immaturity. While, on the whole, Telemachus does display the characteristics of how a young man should behave, such as deference towards the old,[124] his youth means he is vulnerable to the nefarious influence of older men and he is liable to be incited to violence.[125]

Whilst it appears in the *Iliad* that there are relatively stable relationships between the young and the old, even in the most extreme circumstances of war, and true intergenerational conflict seems to be absent, in the *Odyssey*, at 1.300, when Athena likens Telemachus' circumstances to those of Orestes, and therefore raises the issue of Orestes' violent response to the usurpation of his throne, conflict is brought into the open. This comparison is repeated by Nestor, who exhorts Telemachus to 'be as brave as Orestes. Then future generations will sing your praises.'[126]

While competition between fathers and sons for honour, as presented in the *Iliad,* is continued in the *Odyssey,* close to the end of the poem, Laertes expresses delight and says, 'What a day this is to warm the heart. My son and grandson competing in valour.'[127] The concept of intergenerational competition is pushed to the extreme when Telemachus proposes to string Odysseus' bow and so win the hand of his own mother.[128] Telemachus even moves beyond contemplation; it is only his father's intervention that thwarts his proto-Oedipal intentions.[129] This appears to be the

[123] 10.551-2.
[124] 3. 22.
[125] 2.189.
[126] 3.200.
[127] 24.512-3.
[128] 21.112.
[129] 21.130.

closest to true conflict between mortal generations that is evident in any of Homer. Even though it is true that the suitors are young men, there are reasons why the *Odyssey* cannot be considered to reflect themes of true intergenerational conflict. There appear to be no men of Odysseus' age range on Ithaca, owing to the Trojan War and the disastrous journey home. As such, any conflict can only be between the single Odysseus and the ranks of Telemachus' generation. The suitors also appear to have been encouraged by older members of their families to encroach on Odysseus' property and authority, so respect for the authority of an older generation does exist. And critically, at the end of the poem, all three generations of the family stride out to face off an angry crowd. At the heart of the drama is a personal battle, not a societal one, reflecting the personal-power structures of the kingship society over the partial socializing of power of an incipient movement in the local islands towards democracy. The overall treatment of youth in the *Odyssey* would appear similar to that in the *Iliad*: the young are generally prone to rash behaviour; each generation tends towards a lower standard of heroism; and the authority of an older generation is a necessary requirement for enforcing justice. And yet, in the references to Orestes and Telemachus' decision to attempt to string his father's bow, the embryonic strains of direct challenge between young and older men does seem to begin to emerge.[130]

[130] This could reflect the beginnings of political change in Greece. Griffin (1980, pp.80-1) points to the differences between political content in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. In particular, he argues that a more realistic political organisation is on display in the *Odyssey*, and suggests that the threat to Odysseus' power comes from an emerging aristocracy, reflecting material reality.

Much has been written about age in Homer,[131] and particularly about Telemachus and his embodiment of 'youth'. Belmont's (1967) *Telemachus and Nausicaa: A Study of Youth* and Austin's (1969) *Telemachos Polymechanos* both contain the argument that Telemachus achieves adulthood through his journeying around the Peloponnese, and that he develops the wily nature of his father by the end of the epic. Both writers suggest it is only by following in his father's footsteps that Telemachus can reach maturity. This is not a model of youthful rebellion, rather the start of a planned succession of kingship. Using a socio-psychological model, Felson (1994) argues that Telemachus only reaches maturity by rejecting the female parent and internalising the idealised father.[132] Felson's view of women in the *Odyssey* is peculiar, particularly when she says, of Telemachus' slaughter of the maids, at book 23: 'this act of vengeance cleanses him of his animosity towards women and rescues him from the misogyny of an Agamemnon' (p.91, in psychoanalytic terms Telemachus evacuates from his mind any love for a woman, thus cleansing him). This statement seems to demonstrate the caution required in using modern psychoanalytic theory to ancient literature as it can lead to speculation on the meaning of ancient literature that may not have been recognisable to the original audience. Outside of such psychoanalytic theorising, relatively little discussion of conflict has taken place on issues to do with age, youth or generations in Homer.

Throughout Homer the gods are given major parts but it is in Hesiod's *Theogony* that a comprehensive and ordered account of the genealogy of the gods is provided, with much said about the relationships between the generations. Chapter 3 deploys

[131] Usefully summarised in Lateiner's entry for 'Youth' in Finkelberg, M. (ed.) (2011, pp.947-9). Lateiner offers evidence for the conservative view of youth's place in society, that son's should follow in their father's footsteps, as found in archaic literature.
[132] pp.67-91.

comparison of *Theogony* with Aeschylus' *Prometheus* but a brief summary of some important factors of Hesiod follow.

In Hesiod, what is normal for the gods is not necessarily normal for humans: by their own divinity, the gods are immortal, which means that violent action by the next generation may be the only way in which power can transfer from group to group. The central succession myth (the Ouranos – Cronos – Zeus conflict) can thus be explained in part by cosmological expediency. Still, there are other factors at work that do qualify this process of intergenerational power shift – such as the negative way in which the soon-to-be-defeated fathers are described. Ouranos is described as evil and cruel and is defined by his wicked behaviour towards his children.[133] Cronos is described in a similar fashion when he carries out a similar imprisonment of his offspring.[134] In both cases, the mothers of the oppressed children enlist the support of other gods to begin a process that will lead to the overthrow of their spouses' generation and the passing of power to the cohort of gods to which their children belong. Critically, Hesiod frames these passages with evaluative language that gives the impression of the natural justice of the passing of power from generation to generation. The natural justice of Zeus' eventual reign, reflected in his union with Themis, the personification of justice and law,[135] demonstrates the correct order of things in the shifts of power between generations. Whilst discussion of generations in the mortal world shows a view of general deterioration over time, no such deterioration is suggested on the divine plane. The open-endedness of this cycle of revolutions is summed up in the story of Zeus' swallowing of Metis - allowing for a future revolution within the world of the

[133] Hesiod *Theogony,* 161-191.
[134] 462-496.
[135] 901.

gods when the prophesized overthrowing of Zeus will occur through the deployment of some stratagem or other.[136]

Works and Days is in some ways a mortal counterpart to the *Theogony*'s guide to the gods, and provides an inverted commentary on two aspects of a gradual deterioration in the esteem in which generations can be held. At an epochal level, in the famous ages of men passage, Hesiod recounts the present age's failings in comparisons to earlier ages.[137] Within this age of 'toil and misery … constant distress … [and] harsh troubles'[138] there are, to Hesiod, further signs of continued deterioration. Hesiod says of children, 'soon they will cease to respect their ageing parents, and will rail at them with harsh words, the ruffians, in ignorance of the god's punishment …'[139] In Hesiod's view, things are getting worse and this decline is both reflected in the behaviour of children and propagated via their eventual seizure of power from an earlier generation.

The four works discussed so far offer a fairly consistent view of youth in society. Each author proposes that, individually and generationally, young men need to be carefully controlled, as, even when this is carried out successfully, there is an inherent propensity towards declining moral standards. Any conflict between generations appears in a personal, context-specific way, rather than as a wider conflict in society. This, perhaps, is understandable given the political and social milieux from which archaic literature emerged, where society was not political in the same way as in the fifth century: power relations in the *polis* were not open to realistic debate on

[136] 897.
[137] Hesiod, *Works and Days,* 110-200.
[138] 175i.
[139] 180.

potential for change. In tragedy, the political penetrates to the heart of the drama and youth is given the language and action of generational opposition. While some of the traditional literary characteristics of youth remain in tragedy, such as inclinations towards impetuousness and arrogance, these are often the consequences of the will to conflict with an older generation born through desire to gain political power, or they are presented as mindsets not wholly contingent on physiological maturity (see chapter 4 on *Antigone* in particular). By turns hostile or sympathetic, the presentations of youth are perhaps a response to a society in which the chances of young men to gain some real power and influence had dramatically increased, whilst the *polis* was by turns comfortable with such change or terrified, depending on how politically secure they felt.

These tentative steps towards defining the differences in attitudes to youth in archaic literature and Greek tragedy show the political in society to be a major driver of change in literary presentations. Differing generic conventions between epic and tragedy should also be taken into account, particularly in the fundamental use of personal genealogies in Homer and Hesiod that do not appear to the same extent in tragedy. But the presentation of epic and tragedy as representative of two discrete textual epochs does not quite give the whole picture: there was some literary continuity between the seventh- and fifth-century intellectual and literary cultures. The texts of the pre-Socratics emerge from pre-democracy, providing a point to triangulate the shifting attitudes towards young men in a changing political society. Culturally and historically, the 'sophists' and their surviving works are much closer to Greek tragedy, to the extent that stereotyped sophistries can be traced in the plays,[140]

[140] Goldhill (1997).

and strands of thinking that begin in the pre-Socratics are also evident in these texts. A brief consideration follows of attitudes to youth that are present in the philosophical sources up to Antiphon (discussed in relation to Attic oratory, along with other early forensic orators in the chapter on *Philoctetes*).[141]

Not all writers who are classed under the heading of pre-Socratic offer useful information. The Milesians (Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes) are mainly concerned with natural sciences, rather than social philosophy, and it is difficult to see how any of their abstractions on cosmology or ontology can help our understanding of youth. Xenophanes offers interesting thoughts on man's relationship with the gods, in terms of the literary presentations of Hesiod and Homer that attribute negative characteristics to the gods,[142] and he writes about the tendency for humans to create pictures of the gods in their own images,[143] but it is difficult to see how this can affect intergenerational relationships. The various positions on the 'singular versus the plural universal' model argued for by Parmenides and Zeno, and Melissus of Samos' proto-atomism, do little to help reveal attitudes to youth either. More helpful comments are found in Heraclitus, who says, 'a man is thought as foolish by a supernatural being as a child (*pais*) is by a man',[144] and he likens drunkenness to immaturity.[145] More generally, he also introduces the explicit concept of strife and necessity: he sees ongoing conflict in the world is the natural order of things.[146]

[141] I make no apologies for omitting surviving fragments from Dionysodorus, Euthydemus and Diogenes of Apollonia as the former two's views survive only as apparent parodies by Plato and the latter's only work is irrelevant.
[142] DK 21B11; KRS 166.
[143] DK 21B15; KRS 169, F9 DK 21B16; KRS 168.
[144] DK 22B79; W 105; M 92; K 57.
[145] DK 22B117; KRS 231; W 48; M 69; K 106.
[146] DK 22B80; KRS 212; W 26; M 28; K 82.

It is in the work of Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Empedocles and the Atomists that more useful material can be found. In an interesting passage in Isocrates' *Busiris,*[147] the fourth-century commentator claims that Pythagoras became so famous that all the young men wished to join his community. He continues to claim the older men were happy the young dedicated themselves to Pythagoras, rather than their own affairs. According to Isocrates, the mystic-mathematician's followers '... are more impressive in their silence than those for the greatest reputation for eloquence.' Held against Isocrates' famous criticism of young men's tendency towards degeneracy and outspokenness,[148] this comment suggests Pythagoras encouraging a cultic discipline amongst his followers that would be beneficial to youth in a society. This view is in stark contrast to later views on philosophers' influence on youth, in particular that of the sophists, that held that to equip young men with the intellectual abilities to out-perform their elders was very dangerous indeed.[149] The view could be formed that it is Pythagoras' disciplined way of life, including silence, rather than his role as a teacher, that was seen by Isocrates, and those he speaks of, as beneficial.

Some sixty years after Pythagoras, Anaxagoras belonged to a much different political and cultural context, as a contemporary and political ally of Pericles. His philosophy of pluralities within pluralities would seem like a useful fit with an emergent democracy – one that saw the whole democratic community as distinct from other political systems, and with separate entities (demes, age groups, social classes etc.) constituting it.[150] Anaxagoras' view was that, while there is order within the diversity of pluralities, there

[147] Isoc. *Busiris* 28.5 - 29.9.
[148] Isoc. *Areopagiticus*, 49-51.
[149] Particularly in Aristophanes' comedies. See *Birds* (1347-59), *Frogs* (149-50), *Clouds (*1321-436), *Wasps* (686).
[150] DK 59B6, KRS 481.

is a tendency for like to attract like. Logically, conflict between like and unlike is a natural resultant state.[151] Furthermore, the view that nothing is generated or destroyed could be applied to relational systems of plural groups, in terms of the generational flow of political power (fitting well with the Hesiodic view of intergenerational divine power).[152]

Empedocles, like Anaxagoras, believed in a materialism of things, that there cannot be nothing.[153] Conflict seems to have played a larger part in his world view too, with love and strife having generative and degenerative powers.[154] He shared the poetic approach of Heraclitus, using verse to articulate his perspective, and, in one verse passage, Empedocles suggests that love and strife alternately shape the human experience and also the universe in totality, in a natural cycle consisting of combination and dispersal (as similarly theorised by Anaxagoras).[155] Most memorably, a fragment records the philosopher saying: 'Alas! Poor wretched race of mortal creatures! What discord and grief have given you birth!'[156] One is left with a gloomy impression of mortals. Not only are they born of strife but Empedocles makes them into potential cannibals, as a believer in reincarnation,[157] and if such barbarity is possible, then conflict between generations can be taken to an extreme form.

Democritus and Leucippus, conventionally referred to together as the early Atomists, make a leap of imagination from the earlier materialist world view to a more

[151] DK 59A41, KRS 492.
[152] DK 59B17, KRS 469.
[153] DK 31B12, KRS 353, W 9, I 18.
[154] DK31B22; KRS 388; W 25; I 37.
[155] DK 31B26; W 16; 1 28.
[156] DK 31B124; KRS 403; W 114; I 118.
[157] DK 31B137; KRS 415; W 124; I 128.

sophisticated theoretical standpoint on the fabric of the world: the atomic structure. It is difficult to see how this might affect more general thinking about societal relations, but the fragments of Democritus containing ethical judgements are perhaps more useful. These relatively numerous fragments seem to reflect a conventional conservatism, particularly relating to moderation and balance,[158] that form a picture of the idealised citizens, one who is mature in age and outlook. And, in the midst of a lengthy passage from Theophrastus, it is claimed that Democritus believed people are atomically different depending on their age or physical state.[159] In combination, these views offer a very hostile morality for young people, considering them as being inherently incapable of right-mindedness. The young are thus ineligible for full political e until they are at an age where their atomic composition would allow them the balanced minds they would need to participate in governance.

The Sophists have been treated by ancient and more modern writers in a less than sympathetic manner, perhaps influenced by the comedy of Aristophanes and the writings of Aristotle and Plato. Looking beyond some of these criticisms, there is much in the sources relating to sophists and their views on a range of social, political and cultural issues that is relevant. Indeed it could be argued that youth is central to all that has been associated with the Sophists. Although not the case for all who have been categorised as Sophists, adolescents of the citizen elite appear to be an important audience for sophistic ideas – tuition fees seemed to have been high enough to exclude students from all but the wealthiest families.[160] There are some traces of

[158] Most prominent in DK 68B3; KRS 593; T D27 and DK68B191; KRS 594; T D55.
[159] DK 68A135; KRS 574, 589; T 113.
[160] Pythagoras charged 100 minas, a huge sum, according to Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers,* DK 80A1; B1; B4 but there is further testimonia that emphasises the civic-mindedness that was also apparently characteristic of his outlook, DK 80B3.

the kind of natural science and philosophy of the pre-Socratics, such as in Gorgias' discussion of nothing and being,[161] but primarily the sophists are associated with ethics and a kind of early sociological and political theory.

Protagoras is the key source for this period, not just because he was closely associated with the Periclean circle at Athens, and so the dominant political ideology, but also because his views set out a clear manifesto to equip youth with the skills to gain political influence.[162] This is astonishing. At a time when those below thirty years old could not hold full political office, and there were age restrictions on inheritance and property ownership, the empowerment of those restricted in their power by law was revolutionary. The Sophists, Protagoras foremost amongst them, are seen in literary sources, famously in the case of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, as setting youth on a direct path towards conflict with their elder relatives and citizen-rulers. Indeed, both the supporters and detractors of Protagoras hold up antithetical argument pairings as typically Protagorean and this reflects a perspective that has conflict, of *logoi* in this case, at the heart of the intellectual system.[163] It is not improbable to suppose that, in classical Athens at least, the link was made, quite easily, between the inherent conflict perceivable in Protagorean arguments and the potential for this to encourage physical violence, a will to power, of those who had studied under him.

Gorgias' rhetorical teachings were not so explicitly tailored to the young, in fact his oratorical training would have been of greater use for those already giving speeches in

[161] DK 82B3A.
[162] DK 80A5.
[163] DK 80A1; B1; B4.

the courts and council,[164] and he shows a respect for traditional values, such as respecting one's parents, that is not in sympathy with Protagoras' relativist view of ethics.[165]

Prodicus is perhaps best known for the '*choice of Heracles'* story in which a moral choice is presented to Heracles who is '... on the cusp between childhood and manhood, at the age when the young become independent and show whether they are going to approach life by the path of goodness or the path of wickedness.'[166] This offers a fairly traditional moral lesson in the virtue of moderation and hard work that is in sympathy with that outlined by the Atomists, who were relatively contemporary. Hippias is also presented as respecting traditional values, by Xenophon, when he describes an exchange with Socrates that has the sophist agree that it is custom everywhere to honour your parents.[167] In combination, these figures seem hardly representative of teachers corrupting young minds into subverting adult political power.

The importance of education and discipline for the young is found in Antiphon, too,[168] although the surviving collection of aphorisms suggest a more pronounced interest in ethics than Prodicus, Gorgias and Hippias (but not to the extent of Protagoras). The fragment from Oxyrhynchus that we have for Antiphon tantalisingly shows the beginnings of an assessment of the ethics presented by the poets and how this might

[164] Plato, *Gorgias* 452e1-453a3.
[165] DK 82B6. Such moral relativism is played out most outrageously in tragedy in Euripides' lost *Aeolus*, in which the son of the play's namesake, Macareus, argues on relativist terms for the proprietary of his impregnation of his sister. See Hall (2006, pp.74-5).
[166] DK 84B2.
[167] Xenophon. *Memoirs of Socrates*, 4.4.19-21.
[168] DK 87B60; DK 87B61. See chapter 6 for discussion on Antiphon.

impact on the young.[169] But drawing any sort of conclusion from this, other than that Antiphon was interested in the effects of education, is a step too far towards speculation.

Thrasymachus of Chalcedon offers the most specific challenge of the old by the young in a fragment that deserves full quotation: 'I wish I had been alive in the old days, when the younger generation could happily remain silent, since matters did not force them to make speeches and their elders were looking after the city in an appropriate manner.'[170] If this is an accurate report of Thrasymachus' speech this is an extraordinary attack on the power structures and traditional organisation of Athenian society. It is true that Thrasymachus' overall view of society was one that relied deeply on an idealised 'ancestral constitution', but in this passage all respect for older members of society seems to have been lost. Conflict between the generations, in this sophist's eyes, is a necessary step towards re-establishing an idealised former political state of affairs.

Sophists, then, seem to bring to the fore the issue of competing value systems for youth and some, such as Protagoras and Thrasymachus, seem to set out a specific policy of supporting young men in rebellion against older citizens. This is in contrast to the pre-Socratics who seem to have much less of an interest in society, other than to support traditional values or warn against the general poverty of existence and the universality of strife. In short, the earlier writers offer a view of unified cosmologies, with conflict as a natural force; and the latter: stratified society with conflict as a social force. It is difficult not to point to the historical events of the Peloponnesian War as

[169] *Oxyrhynchus Papyrus* 414.
[170] Dionysus of Halicarnassus, *Demosthenes* 3.

playing a large part in fuelling the potential for this kind of conflict. The increasing ratio of young men to older men in Athens, and mounting pressure on Athenian social structures, must have impacted on all parts of the city's social and cultural outlook. The democratic institutions of the time, those that would have reinforced group identities, including age-groups, must have provided the opportunity for sophists to find their market and formed part of the combative intellectual milieu from which the philosophically minded could draw inspiration.

Herodotus' *Histories*, in contrast, provide a wider regional perspective on the workings of societies and contain an impressive number of stories, anecdotes and alleged historical accounts that include a wealth of sociological and anthropological material. Much of Herodotus' writing is more concerned with the barbarian, rather than the Greek, but a careful approach, such as carried out by Hall,[171] can help to reveal what the writer's view of what a normative state is in relation to society and traditional roles within it. In relation to youth, this is demonstrated effectively, in book 2, when Herodotus likens the respect that Egyptian young men have for their elders with the attitudes in Sparta, the famously non-democratic Greek city-state.[172]

Quite clearly, Herodotus shows an interest in succession and conflict and immediately right from book 1 we are introduced to the tyranny of Pisistratus [173] and the conflict between grandfather and grandson, Astyages and Cyrus.[174] Further brief digressions

[171] *Inventing the Barbarian* (1989).The passage describing the matrilineal traditions of the Lydians, a clear example of an inverted social norm, to a Greek, presented as a curio. Herodotus *Histories* 1.173-4
[172] 2.80-1.
[173] 1.59-64.
[174] 1.123-31.

on tyrants and their rise to power appear fairly frequently, such as those regarding Hippias or Periander.

The anthropological approach that Herodotus takes results in many stories regarding strange and, to the Ionian author, foreign rituals. In a passage in the lengthy description of Egypt, Herodotus retells the story he claims to have heard from the priests at Papremis of the origins and features of a ritual involved in the festival of Ares.[175] The ritual, it seems, involved a staged gang fight for entry to the shrine and is associated with the young adulthood of Ares. Other passages also include reports of various rituals that are associated with young men passing into adulthood, such as the Nasamonians' adventures in the Libyan Desert that runs like a rites of passage story.[176]

Many of the observations are made in a typically subjective, Herodotean way, but, when speech is reported, more familiar tropes on youth emerge. In book 3, Croesus advises Cambyses not to, 'act on the passionate impulse of youth', although this is from a Lydian to a Persian.[177] The intercultural view of impulsive youth appears again in the story of the Macedonian Amyntas' futile attempts to stop the rash and violent actions of his son, Alexander.[178] In, perhaps, the most explicit passage on youth in the work, Xerxes explains his flip-flopping over whether to take up his deceased father's campaign against the Greeks as due to his *neōtēs,* a state of being that also led him to lose his temper and insult a man older than himself.[179] In these few lines, Herodotus

[175] 2.63-4.
[176] 2.32-3.
[177] 3.36.1.
[178] 5.19.
[179] 7.13. Although this inability to properly make an independent, fully accountable decision is what allows the sons of the Theban leader, Attaginus, to escape execution on charges of treachery (9.88).

presents the centuries-old and region-wide tableau of youth: intellectually incapable, disrespectful to elders and prone to violent eruptions of temper. But, by some accounts, Xerxes was probably in his mid-thirties, certainly older than Darius when he came to power, and most likely older than both Cyrus and Cambyses when they began their reigns.[180] Youth, in this context, is a psychological state rather than a biological phase. As has been pointed out extensively in scholarship on Herodotus, he presents a picture of the barbarian that helps define what it means to be Greek.[181] The view of youth in Persian society, though, doesn't appear to be much different from that of the Greek. In Xerxes speech, however, Herodotus shows the different political view of youth, the ridiculousness, to the Greek, of a youthful ruler, a political circumstance that can only exist within a monarchic society. This inversion of normative Greek views is neatly expressed in Book 3, where the famous section in which Xerxes argues that monarchy is the best form of government is preceded by a picture of Xerxes that shows him as a typical young man in a hurry.[182]

The case of a naturally deteriorating moral line of kings or relations is shown consistently in Persian society, according to Herodotus, who reports the popular saying that: 'Darius was a tradesman, Cambyses a tyrant, and Cyrus a father', the effect being to see the more recent generations to be concerned only with money and power, respectively.[183] Herodotus' own view on the theme of temporal deterioration is more flexible, and he says: 'for people who were brave once might easily have deteriorated

[180] Although there seems to be no incontestable evidence for the exact ages of Persian kings, see: How, W.W. & Wells, J. (1961, p.131); Dandamaev, M. A. (1989, p.373).
[181] Hall (1989), Blok (2002, pp.225-242).
[182] 3.71-82.
[183] 3.89. See also the final sections of the *Histories*, which look back on the glory days of Persian army discipline, against their current ill-discipline.

today, just as people who in old times were nothing to speak of might by now have improved.'[184]

Other stories about young people are almost always horrific in detail and seemingly designed to display the barbarity of some communities, such as the sacrifice of the eldest sons at Thessian Halos[185] and the horrific revenge story of Xerxes' chief eunuch, Hermotimus, where the father is forced to castrate his own sons before he suffers the same fate at their hands.[186] Hermotimus' father/victim is shown to have acted under compulsion, unlike the story of a Thracian chieftain who, in revenge for disobedience, gouged out the eyes of his six sons.[187]

The Histories contains the same causal criticism of psychological states and actions associated with youth as the previous works discussed above. What *is* striking, though, is the omission of reference to youth in the extended descriptions of war, when considering the generally positive descriptions of young men, physically, in other contemporary and earlier texts, and when compared to the extensive description of young warriors in the *Iliad.* Stories about youth are related both to Greek and barbarian contexts but no particular impression is left that intergenerational conflict is an important theme in societies, rather that the young generally recognise their true place in the age hierarchy, even if they are a king such as Xerxes.

[184] 9.27.
[185] 7.197.
[186] 8.105-6. Castration of boys has already featured at 3.48 in a hostile passage regarding the tyrant of Corinth, Periander.
[187] 8.117.

Although contemporary, Thucydides' history of Athens at War towards the end of the fifth century is very different from Herodotus' partial account of Athenian military history. Primarily, Thucydides is a political writer, attempting to shape an understanding of how war begins and strategy emerges in response to external factors to which any *polis* at war is subject, i.e. social and demographic upheaval, political unity or factionalism and the economic impact of warfare. With this in mind, youth, or relations between generations, can be considered highly political in Thucydides. Whereas Herodotus gives an interesting anthropological perspective on how youth fits into the idea of Greek/barbarian polarity, Thucydides maps the points at which fractures in a society under immense stress might appear between different classes, ethnicities, gender or ages. The emphasis on differences between Greeks, or rather Athenians and their opponents, facilitates a narrowing of focus from regional to national that allows a closer view of polis-culture specific attitudes to society. That is not to say that commonalities between *poleis* are not to be found in Thucydides: in speeches attributed to both the Corinthians and Athenians, representatives speak of the importance of the young learning from the old before making decisions on whether to break treaties, form alliances, or declare war.[188] What the young should learn, Thucydides seems to suggest, is not to be too eager for battle. Athens, at the outbreak of war had, 'great numbers of young men (*neotēs*) who had never been in a war and were consequently far from unwilling to join in this one', (2.8) and this impulse should be restrained. The Spartan general at the onset of war, Archidamus, is reported to have had similar expectation, basing his initial strategy on luring out the young and inexperienced soldiers by laying waste the surrounding land.[189]

[188] 1.42, 1.72, 1.80.
[189] 2.20-1.

The power remains with older men, even at times of extreme ruptures in society. During the civil war in Corcyra, fathers belonging to the Democratic Party were reported to have killed their sons, but no reports of patricide are given.[190] Stasis and bloody revenge, according to Thucydides, go hand in hand and at these times, 'family relations were a weaker tie than party membership.'[191] Intergenerational conflict and political revolution, at least in the account of civil war in democratic Corcyra, would seem naturally to coexist.

Tyrannies do feature prominently, but are less personal and more political.[192] At 1.13, the political progression from hereditary monarchy to tyranny, as a precursor to oligarchy or democracy, is explicitly stated. There appears an important paradox here: whilst the natural progression towards democracy from monarchy is considered positive, there is a general impression of degeneration, particularly amongst political leaders, over time. This could simply be anti-democratic sentiment but it also demonstrates that these incompatible views are not necessarily works of logic, more like general impressions.[193]

As in Homer, the exhortation to battle in honour of the glorious deeds of one's forebears is a common ploy in swinging popular opinion round to an aggressive view on how to proceed. Pericles' peroration in his speech to the Athenian assembly before the outbreak of war, 'we must live up to the standard they [the previous generation]

[190] 3.81.
[191] 3.82.
[192] Although Thucydides is keen to point out alleged inaccuracies in previous historical works in relation to personal aspects of tyranny. 1.20 and 5.53-9 are famous examples of the author's claims to historical objectivity and accuracy.
[193] Clearly in Thucydides, Pericles is a major exception, described as wielding all the power (2.65). This is not a traditional description of a democratic leader.

set',[194] sets a generational precedent and challenge that proves impossible to ignore. And comparison to the achievements of the previous generation is encouraged in Pericles' famous funeral oration.[195]

Understandably, the martial abilities of the citizen hoplite class are, in part, stratified by age. In book 2.13, the eldest and the youngest in the army are tasked with the defence of Athens, presumably a less physically strenuous activity than combat in the field and, crucially, one requiring less combat experience, such as the formation of a phalanx.[196] That is not to say that the young are shielded from the worst of war: far from it. Brasidas tasks the youngest of his soldiers with dangerous harrying of an advancing enemy as he led a retreat in Thrace,[197] and Thucydides states, 'the flower of Thespian youth had fallen', during fighting in Boeotia.[198]

More than anything else, Thucydides is important as he writes extensively about the figure of Alcibiades, the ancient embodiment of the brilliant but reckless aristocratic youth.[199] That Alcibiades is defined by his age is undisputable: at his introduction, his relative age is immediately stated,[200] and his keenness for renewed war with Sparta is attributed, in part, to the fact that he felt politically marginalised because of his

[194] 1.144.
[195] 2.36.
[196] Young and old soldiers are again grouped together at 5.64, this time on the Spartan side. See also 5.75.
[197] 4.125.
[198] 4.133.
[199] His brilliant political manoeuvring but reckless disregard for democratic process is immediately demonstrated at 5.45.
[200] 5.43. He is thought to have been aged between 30 and 33 (Gomme, Andrewes and Dover, 1978, pp.48-9; Hornblower, 2008, p.101).

relatively young age.[201] Nicias, in his opposition to the Sicilian expedition, is explicit in his use of Alcibiades' youth as a criticism of his ability to make rational choices, saying: 'he is still too young for his post' and that such an important decision should not be made, 'by a young man in a hurry.'[202] It is not an overstatement to suggest that this speech by Nicias is one of the most important in Greek literature for evidence of a fracturing of society in late fifth-century Athens between different age groups. Of course, Thucydides does tend to present speeches, opinions and evidence in binary pairings, but when Nicias, at 6.13, makes clear that party lines have formed around the young and the old, the difference of opinion based on experience, as set out in book two (see above), has mutated into political age-factionalism. [203] Alcibiades doesn't let the accusation of youthful incompetence pass, retorting: 'so, in my youth and with this folly of mine which is supposed to be so prodigious, I found the right arguments for dealing with the power of the Peloponnesians.'[204] Even more persuasively, he goes on to ask that the young/old distinctions be broken down, that, 'neither youth nor age can do anything one without the other.'[205] This is an astute political move, and clinches the argument but, as Thucydides goes on to show, there are real undercurrents of intergenerational opposition ready to erupt. By the end of book six, Alcibiades is under suspicion for his involvement in the mutilation of the Hermae,[206] and there is a general feeling of resentment towards young men who appear to have grown in number in the

[201] Thucydides qualifies his description of Alcibiades as 'a man who was still young in years', with: 'or would have been thought so in any other city in Hellas', (5.43) which suggests that political involvement by young people was even more restricted in other *poleis*.
[202] 6.12.
[203] Interestingly, Thucydides' own view of Alcibiades is quite favourable, perhaps due to common oligarchic sympathies. At 6.15, the picture drawn of Alcibiades is of a master tactician whose personal misdemeanours made him objectionable.
[204] 6.17.
[205] 6.18.
[206] 6.27-8.

city[207] and are thought to be involved in sacrilegious activities. The imminent Sicilian expedition would have offered a very timely release and redirection of aggression in Athens.[208]

These speeches are mirrored by those taking place in Syracuse where age is again identified as a factor that shapes the political landscape. Athenagoras, comparable as a demagogue to Athens' Cleon, makes the case against youth clear, claiming that the young are not fit for office and have oligarchic tendencies.[209]

By the time news of the total annihilation of the Greek expeditionary force at Sicily reaches Athens, the political system in the city is on the brink of collapse. The Athenian's first response is to appoint an advisory group, one that excludes young men, to oversee decision-making.[210] This *Proboulē* had a minimum age requirement of 40,[211] emphasising the shift of power away from the political factions of young men. The point is clear: the errors of the expedition, initiated by the fiery and youthful Alcibiades must be put right by the older, wiser generation.

Experiencing unbearable external pressures, the survival of democracy at Athens becomes untenable and an oligarchy is established. A new 'council' of four hundred is self-appointed with the support of a group of so called 'Hellenic youth' (*Hellenes*

[207] 6.26.
[208] It has been argued that Nicias attempts to open up an intergenerational divide to support his more moderate approach to the expedition to Sicily (Hornblower, 2008, pp.361-2) but if he is defeated, then how are we to interpret the sudden re-emergence of generationally-defined invective that follows the *Hermae* incident?
[209] 6.38-9.
[210] 8.1.
[211] Pseudo-Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution*, 29.

neaniskoi), who Thucydides presents as some sort of militia.[212] At this most crucial point in the history of Athens, an old form of generational relations reappears as the old in society use the young to inflict violence and bolster their political authority. Youth becomes a political instrument rather than a coalescence of political affiliation.

Famously, Thucydides' work ends mid-sentence, unfinished, and Western literature misses out on a great historian's presentation of Athens' final defeat. However, an overall trajectory can still be traced for society's, or at least Thucydides', views of youth as the political crisis at Athens deepened.

For much of the work, views of youth resemble those found in much archaic literature: the young are shown to be generally reckless but also encouraged to take part in dangerous military activities to prove their physical prowess. Youth's lack of experience results in the need to balance out their more rash tendencies with the sage advice of the older generation. Before the Sicilian expedition, something seems to change, in part, it seems, due to demographic changes in the city. The natural polarity between young and old has morphed into a formally political opposition with Alcibiades and Nicias representing generational units around which well-defined sets of attitudes have coalesced.

[212] 8.69. The prefix 'Hellenic' is generally considered superfluous, serving only to clarify that these are Greek, not Skythian, young men (Gomme, Andrewes & Dover, 1981, pp.80-1). The oligarchy seems to have been supported by a number of political 'clubs', *hetaireia*, (8.81) and while there is nothing to suggest, at least in book 8, that these had a particular association with youth, the idea of a drinking club with political associations (oligarchic) sounds very much like that 'gang' that mutilated the Hermae and was exclusively associated with young men. See Lintott (1982, pp.125-185) and Chapter 7 on *Orestes*, below.

Once Athens itself is under threat, therefore, youth come to be considered with greater suspicion, particularly for their perceived sympathies for oligarchy (the lack of textual sources for youth in oligarchic societies in the late fifth century is to be much regretted, but the nature of political systems means that it is only really in democracies that a full range of views on social factors has the potential to be heard. Oligarchies, like monarchies, do not tolerate open expression of dissent and as this often comes from young people it is not surprising that only the dominant voice is heard in these societies). And when there is full-blown stasis and political trauma, youth are presented as belonging either to secretive 'clubs' or roaming the city ready for trouble. Youth, from the perspective of Thucydides, is a key political factor in the war history of Athens. With the final years of the war corresponding with the decline in the production of new tragedy, and, I shall argue, the intensification of political presentations of young people by Euripides, a view can be formed of the empirical reality that tragedy reflected of a society in which an art form, a political form and a set of constructions of the perceptions of youth combined in a final amplified set of plays.

I am aware that the thesis omits a substantial discussion of Old Comedy, which presents a clear case for inclusion, since it is contemporaneous with many of the works of Sophocles and Euripides, and since many of Aristophanes' plays contain extremely fertile material for the analysis of themes relating to youth and politics. But there are several reasons why, although references are made to comedies intermittently when they are acutely relevant to the argument, as above in the case of *Clouds* and Euripides' *Aeolus*, I have decided against including a separate treatment of Aristophanes and indeed the often substantial fragments of other poets of Old

Comedy. First, the very scale of the evidence. It would be impossible to compress a discussion of conflict between generations in Aristophanes into anything less than a highly reductive single chapter. Secondly, the issue has been very well discussed by previous scholars, especially in the commentaries of Sommerstein and in Strauss's monograph on fathers and sons, and I do not want merely to rehash their findings (this is not to say that I do not think there is ample room for new analysis of the issue in Old Comedy). But most importantly, avoiding a detailed discussion of comedy allows me to short-circuit the interpretive loop which has led scholars to infer a model of inter-generational conflict from Aristophanic fiction and then impose it on Athenian 'history'—a model which would obstruct, rather than facilitate, an objective, fresh, and preconception-free approach to tragedy, which is the principal goal of my thesis. The extent to which modern formulations of ancient views of youth have been inspired by Old Comedy in itself presents a problem which would require an entire doctoral thesis to dismantle. Finally, there is one very simple difference between the two genres' treatment of the issue. Comedy does offer many examples of what are, apparently, normative, even clichéd views of youth in Athenian society presented (albeit in a typically extreme and comical Aristophanic way) either directly or inversely. This is in acute contrast to tragedy's more complex reflection, refraction, mediation and confusion of political ideas.

So much for the philosophical, historical and fictive sources, in which a great deal of evidence of views on youth in society can be found. The sources other than historiography for 'real world' social history, primarily oratory, biography and epigraphy and biography, are just as potentially important. With the exceptions of Antiphon, Andocides and Lysias, almost all the extant orators (Isaeus, Demosthenes,

Hyperides, Aeschines etc.) were working rather later than the tragedians, in the fourth century. The earliest surviving biographies, by Isocrates and Xenophon, are also fourth-century works. So is the *Constitution of Athens* attributed to Aristotle. Rather than analyse these texts in detail, I simply refer to them in the course of the argument when data they preserve is relevant (with a more lengthy discussion of the early Attic orators included in the chapter on *Philoctetes* as these sources provide interesting political commentary from the period at which that play was produced). Many of these sources are excellently summarised in Dover's ground-breaking (1974) *Greek Popular Morality,* which, by covering roughly the 420s BCE to the 320s, presents some sources that are contemporary with the historical period on which this thesis is focussed.[213] In particular, Dover dedicates a whole section to the various attitudes of ancient sources to age but his approach, however, suggests an uninterrupted continuity of attitudes towards young men that does now give due to the political influence on social constructions that this thesis will argue for.[214]

In the case of epigraphical records, this literary thesis cannot, of course, assay an analysis of all remaining fifth-century Athenian inscriptions in *Inscriptiones Graecae*, however worthwhile a study of the language used about age groups in this medium would be.[215] But the sort of social and familial history which both oratory and epigraphy so usefully document has, fortunately, been scrutinised in several works which paint revealing prosopographical pictures of key aspects of life in the Athenian polis, which I have found very useful for understanding the background to the

[213] p.2.
[214] pp. 102-8.
[215] If the category of 'youth' is to become a serious area of study in the ancient world, there is a very pressing case indeed for a rigorous and expert analysis of evidence relating to young people in the epigraphic record.

tragedians' presentation of social relationships. The two most important here are Davies' (1971) *Athenian Propertied Families* and Whitehead's (1986) *The Demes of Attica*. A brief assessment of these works will demonstrate the potential for, and the benefits and limitations of, incorporating epigraphic, oratorical and biographical material into the discussion of youth in society.

Davies' work on the 'liturgical class' is massively useful on a number of counts. First, the overall picture that Davies offers of Athenian society is one in which powerful families can retain huge economic and political power over many generations. The families of key fifth-century figures, such as Callias, Demonsthenes, Pericles and Critias appear to maintain huge, sometimes astronomical, amounts of wealth over hundreds of years and the evidence suggests that this economic power was, as routine, converted into political power by the requirement that these families provide a trireme or fund a dithyramb or theatrical performance, all activities that would give some form of political advantage over those could not afford ostentatious public displays. What is especially interesting is that, even with the institution of ostracism, many of these families kept hold of their power and influence in fluctuating political times: the *Realpolitik* of democracy or oligarchy appears to have had limited impact on the politico-economic power of amassed and inherited wealth. But the generational flow of wealth does sometimes come to an end, with death, misfortune, war or sometimes plain ineptitude. In this respect, one wayward young man could jeopardise the entire family legacy. Cumulatively, a generation of young men from the established families, unwilling to accept the old ways, could endanger the entire edifice of inter-connected power and influence. But they would also present a stark and constant

reminder of the real power that lay behind the machinery of democracy. Then, as now, class was intergenerational.

The lateral reinforcement of identity that Davies demonstrates is important for overall continuing family identity is discussed extensively in Whitehead but in relation to the *deme*. It is clear that the Cleisthenic reforms at the end of the sixth century contributed towards the weakening of political power of wealthy families, but only to a point at first. Discussing Cimon, Whitehead concedes that, in the mid fifth century at least, political authority via local kinship power was still achievable.[216] Later in the century, personal political skill, rather than economic power, appears to have been a more important factor in election to important political office.[217] In relation to political power and youth, the shifting of influence away from hierarchical family lines to lateral community cohorts is reminiscent of Mannheim's theory of generational units (see chapter 1, above). The breakdown of the political primacy of family in favour of community-based politics would suggest that influence would first of all be sought amongst peer groups, rather than kin groups. Naturally, this would lead to stratified, to one extent or another, political groups defined by common feature, of which, I would argue, age is evident from tragedy, and most clearly in Thucydides.

These two introductory chapters, on the classical and (mainly) sociological doxographies on youth in tragedy, and on youth in non-tragic sources, offer evidence for two main arguments that support the methodology of this thesis. First, tragedy

[216] pp.305-12.
[217] pp.311-12. Of course, the two are not entirely inseparable. As we have already seen, the education required to become expert in rhetoric required significant wealth, as did the employment of a speechwriter, but direct patronage seems to have become a blunt tool by the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, by Whitehead's account.

should be considered as is a unique set of sources for investigating attitudes to youth in fifth century Athens. It is highly responsive to the political climate, incorporates many varied representations of youth and was by far the most accessible media of the age. By contrast, the preceding archaic sources, and to a large extent fifth century non-tragic sources, show a remarkably homogeneity in characterisations of youth, which are primarily negative. Secondly, classical scholarship has failed adequately to interrogate these sources in such a way that negates some of the assumptions about attitudes to youth that have been drawn into scholarship from Aristophanes or from archaic, atavistic views that may not have fully represented the social constructions of youth in Athens.

In summary, the case is made for the use of an exceptional set of sources for research that is largely absent from classical scholarship in this field. Discussion will proceed by assessment of a number of plays against their social and political context, with use of non-tragic sources to demonstrate where representations in tragedy differ from traditional views on youth, reflecting the distance between literary constructions that had a wide public audience and those with a much more limited one. Working on this basis, investigation not turns to the plays themselves.

Chapter 3

The Aeschylean *Prometheus*.

The Shock of the *neos*: Intergenerational Conflict in *Prometheus*

Prometheus is a play that has long provided a challenge to those who struggle to reconcile its characters' actions with Aeschylus' supposed piety, and indeed its allegedly 'anomalous' theology is one of the main arguments deployed by those who doubt that Aeschylus wrote it.[218] While I acknowledge that doubt remains as to the authorship of this play, for my purposes this is not an essential issue to decide, since this chapter considers the play more broadly as a product of the Athenian imagination and representative of fifth-century cultural thought. For the sake of convenience, I henceforward refer to the play's author as Aeschylus, and the version of the myth of Prometheus it stages as belonging to Aeschylus, rather than, for example, to Hesiod. This practice also conforms with my view of the date of the play's first production. It is striking how many semantic clusters of terms associated with justice, authority and stasis abound in its 1100 or so lines, all terms and issues that were central to the highly political Athens of the period, giving an impression of a play that is, regardless of authorship, profoundly political, a product of the general Athenian imaginative and political milieu of the mid fifth-century.[219]

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[218] Scholarly opinion on the authorship of the play is traceable through e.g. Thomson (1932, pp.1-5), Taplin (1977, pp.460-9), Griffith (1983, pp.31-35), Podlecki (2005, pp.195-200 and Hall (2009, p.230).

[219] Discussion on the nature of the political in Aeschylean tragedy is well trodden ground, a good summary of which can be found in the preface to the second edition of Podlecki's 1999 *The Political Background of Aeschylean Tragedy*. As *Prometheus* is treated here in generic rather than author-specific terms, Podlecki's own view that aspects of the play must reflect Aeschylus' experience in the court of Heiron in Sicily is irrelevant. For our purposes, the broader view of the political will be adopted, that of Carter (2007), following Macleod (1982, p.90), that the political is 'a concern with human beings as part of the community of the *polis.*'

Such terms are directly reflective of the play's themes, most clearly in the discussion of Zeus' so-called tyranny. It could quite easily be concluded that if a single subject of the play needed to be identified it would be the discussion of the political nature of Zeus' rule, and yet there is another major theme in the play: intergenerational conflict. While this concept has been widely discussed by scholars in their commentaries, it has most often been in relation to the Ouranos/Kronos/Zeus generational succession that forms part of the Hesiodic cosmology from which the play draws its inspiration. The political presentation of tyranny as a dramatic theme has never been fully explored within a wider social framework of relations between young and established members of ancient Greek society. By discussing the political theme in the play in a vacuum, isolating it from its social contexts, previous scholars' analyses of the speeches of the characters have found it difficult to achieve consistency of interpretation.

This chapter will attempt to begin to re-address these problems by demonstrating how the political in the play, i.e the concept of tyranny, is intimately related to the movement of power *between* generations, evident through the play's use of language associated with youth and generational opposition in contemporary Greek society. While this chapter will not offer a view on the justness of characters' actions or attempt a rehabilitation of Zeus, examination of the relationships between the play's characters, and the generations they represent, will offer a possible alternative to the interpretations offered in previous scholarship.

To properly understand how generational factors influence the descriptions of Zeus in the play, consideration of how he came to power, as well as how he is judged to wield

that power, will be central. Consideration will be given to how the sense of the 'newness' of Zeus' regime, a possible synonym of 'youthfulness', enhances his tyrannical appearance as the violent conflict of the recent Titanomachy echoes through the play's speeches. The characterisation of Prometheus will be shown as critical to reinforcing the tyrannical aspect of Zeus, as he becomes increasingly associated with, if not loyal to, the defeated generation of Titans. There are other features of the play that enhance the sense of intergenerational difference. The links between new technologies (especially Zeus' thunderbolt), for example, cause further reflection on 'newness' as a feature of tyranny, conflict and inter-generational shift.[220]

It must be acknowledged early on that most discussion of intergenerational conflict in tragedy at some point turns to the psychological or psychoanalytic. Aeschylus, like other tragedians, has been the subject of psychoanalytic theorizing by classicists and often these investigations have focused either on developing a Freudian picture of the characters the playwrights created or exploring the cathartic aspect of tragedy.[221] Similarly, the works of psychoanalysts on *Prometheus* have tended towards investigation of the mythological figure rather than the play's character.[222] For the purposes of a general investigation of the social and political collations of youth in this play, such works offer limited interest. Furthermore, the whole application of psychoanalytic theory to literature has been shown to be fraught with danger, with

[220] Havelock (1950, pp.19-31) frames civil war within changing technological advances and in *Prometheus* (and it must be said, in all other textual sources relating to the myth such as Plato's *Protagoras* 320d-321e as well as *Theogony* 535-580 and *Works and Days* 48-58 such material innovations play a central role in the conflict between the Titans and Olympians. The concept of the shock of the new is manifested most obviously in the triumphant blow delivered by Zeus with the use of his thunderbolt.

[221] Devereux (1970, pp.35-48) is a good example of both.

[222] An excellent early survey of psychoanalytic works on Prometheus - the play and the mythological figure - can be found in Caldwell (1974, pp.22-4).

both classicists and psychoanalysts sometimes guilty of misrepresenting core aspects of the other's theories.[223] Surely, though, even the most superficial adoption of a psychoanalytic perspective would highlight that conflict between generations can be seen to fit with the Oedipus/Electra complex: the younger generation is angry with and wants to displace the older. It would not be difficult for a Freudian/Jungian analyst – for example, or, indeed, an adherent of a different psychoanalytic school – to propose that the mutual generational antagonism in *Prometheus* could in some sense be considered as a blatantly obvious thematic signifier of our unconscious desires. The field is too specialized, the subject too broad, and the potential findings too remote from my own method, which prefers to relate dramatic fictions to their more contingent social contexts, to be given any more attention at this point. But psychoanalytic sources that shed light on sociological conditions will be revisited in much greater detail in chapter 8, when we come to weigh up how 'universal' the politics of youth were in the specific situation of the fifth century BCE.

Returning to the core endeavour, this is the question that will be kept firmly in mind throughout my analysis: in what sense does *Prometheus* as a product of the Athenian imagination, demonstrate a political presentation of the concept of inter-generational conflict that can be viewed as both political and social? That is, how do 'youth' and 'generational (dis)loyalty' fit into the play's overarching political discussion of tyranny?

First though, the play requires some introduction in terms of the mythic background and how it has been interpreted by scholars over the years. This will assist in clarifying those themes that have been identified as central to the play's action and narrative as

[223] Goldhill (2006, pp.340-3) provides a useful reminder of the importance, and danger, of using psychoanalytic theory in the Classics.

well as allowing brief surveys of those aspects of the play's context, such as authenticity or place within a dramatic cycle, that (although they do not form the primary focus of this investigation) feature extensively in the classical tradition's treatment of the play, and so require brief attention as the discussion develops. The following general observations will thus include some of the major interpretations that have been applied to the play and highlight the centrality of intergenerational conflict and the political in *Prometheus*.

The play builds from a reworking of a myth that – as far as the textual record shows, since oral tradition on the subject predating Hesiod's eighth-century work has not survived – was first systematically recorded in Hesiod's *Theogony*. This is the rise to power of Zeus, his overthrowing of the Titans and his anger at Prometheus for his trickery and deceit. Throughout the *Theogony* the predominant theme is inter-familial strife: between father Kronos and son Zeus, between older Titans and younger Olympians and between the authority of Zeus and the insubordination of his older cousin Prometheus. This 'Succession Myth'[224] and aspects of the Prometheus/Zeus relationship are subsequently redefined by a changed genealogical background of Prometheus in the play. In Hesiod, Prometheus is the son of Iapetos, a first-generation Titan, and the Oceanid Clymene, of the second generation.[225] The family history is rewritten in *Prometheus* and the protagonist claims direct decent from Themis who he states is the same divinity as Gaia.[226] Assuming he bears the same paternity as in Hesiod, this places him much more centrally in the Titan genealogy by virtue of birth to

[224] West (1997).
[225] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 507-12.
[226] 209.

a primordial mother and first-generation Titan father.[227] This change also places Prometheus centrally within the play's account of the *Titanomachy,* the battle between Olympians and Titans, as a major protagonist and traitor against his brotherly combatants, and heightens the inter-generational aspect of his relationship with Zeus. More broadly, the modified presentation of the conflict between Olympians and Titans frames Prometheus' account of his role within the Titanomachy in *Prometheus* as an illustration of '…the vicissitudes, the changing circumstances, of cosmic politics'.[228] The effect on the presentation of Prometheus is to show him as defined by political events that are inextricably linked to power relations between generations, and in particular his place in a sequence of 'tyrannical' episodes of divine power transfer. The tyrannical aspect of shifts in the balance of power on the divine plane is one of the key themes of the play that is discussed below.

Some other features of the Hesiodic story of Prometheus are retained by Aeschylus who innovates a more poetic rendering of the *Titanomachy* than Hesiod's sometimes formulaic hexameter perhaps allowed. A much greater prominence is given to the aspects of Prometheus' actions that relate to mortals, including speeches on the implications of Zeus' revenge for humans, and the tragedian brings to the fore Prometheus' motivations for assisting humankind. However, where Hesiod frames his language with positive evaluative terms when discussing Zeus,[229] the less panegyric presentation of the god in *Prometheus* continues to provoke much scholarly debate (see n.218) The details of the shifting battle lines of this debate are not particularly

[227] Conacher (1980, p.8).
[228] Ibid. p.14.
[229] In Hesiod's history of the gods, before Zeus' overthrows his father Kronos' rule he gathers together all Olympians and Titans, and pronounces: '… that he who was without office or right under Kronos, should be raised to both office and rights as is just.' (396-8). The use of terms such as *dikē* and *timē* is indicative of the cosmic order that Hesiod shows Zeus to represent.

relevant to my discussion, and so for present purposes a very few examples of opinion will help highlight how the political themes of tyranny and generational opposition are critical to any work on the play.[230] Reinhardt's opinion, that 'newness' is the primary defining factor in perceptions of Zeus' character and his rule, clearly supports the view that inter-generational conflict is of primary political importance.[231] Similarly, Conacher's reiteration of Lloyd-Jones' argument,[232] that Zeus' actions may be unpalatable but they are at least understandable within the context of political struggle, is a rare example of Prometheus' speeches in the play not being taken at face value.[233] Both views show how a more nuanced view of Zeus can be developed, one that demonstrates the importance of the politicisation of newness or youth. Complicating this view is the argument that many Athenians would have considered 'innovation' to be an important part of their self-definition and that there would have been an unusual tolerance for the new at Athens of the period.[234] But innovation is a rational rejection of tradition, even when innovating new 'irrationalities', such as etiologies. Youth, by contrast, is biological, non-rational and develops without a conscious drive but by inherent physiological processes. Discussing the nineteenth-century view of the crowd in *The Crowd and the Mob: From Plato to Canetti*, McClelland says:

[230] Extensive surveys are made by Conacher (1980, pp.120-140) in an appendix to his literary commentary on *Prometheus* and in Griffith' 1977 *The Authenticity of the Prometheus*, but the issue appears to maintain a special place in all commentaries and extended discussion of the play.
[231] 1949, p.69.
[232] Ibid., p.131-2, Lloyd-Jones (1971, p.66).
[233] O' Sullivan (2005, p.140) does point out that most of the claims made against Zeus are by Prometheus but then goes on to say that the Oceanids or Hephaistos are less biased witnesses, a claim that will be shown to have significant weakness below.
[234] D'Angour (2011).

> In the modern idiom, no new generation ever came genetically programmed with the social advances of its predecessors, while each new generation came complete with a programme from the remote animal past into which the crowd could hack at will.[235]

In this sense, youth could be considered to pose a direct threat to the innovative self-image of older Athenians: their biological newness a precondition for an irrationality that could annihilate the rational, willing-in-to-being of contemporary Athenian culture, society and politics.

Viewed in the round, and in literary rather than exclusively religious or historical terms,[236] Zeus and Prometheus in the play also seem to offer a classic thematic example of becoming enemies out of friendship, a well-worn theme in ancient Greek literature, that almost always ends in violent confrontation.[237] Prometheus' failure to show reciprocity for his elevated post-Titanomachic position is a basic failure to maintain *xenos/philos* etiquette. Some scholars' remarkably narrow view of the Zeus/Prometheus relationship fails to acknowledge the simple fact that both the cosmology of the play and that derived from Hesiod are consistent in showing a god world that is in flux, full of shifting allegiances and violent jockeying for power. The mortal experience of divine *dikē* offers just as much evidence of the instability of

[235] McClelland (1989, p.21).
[236] This should be taken to mean a view that is roughly in sympathy with Kitto's reminder that literary criticism is 'architectonic', both in terms of providing a set of critical apparatuses that allow rigorous examination of literary works and by systematizing our knowledge of the techniques of tragedy and its receptions (1934, p.20). That is, a balance must be maintained that acknowledges the technical way in which the tragedian influences presentation whilst allowing that the general political and social milieu from which the form of tragedy emerged influences the inclusion of themes and concepts.
[237] Seaford, (1994) - see also Konstan (1997).

concepts when associated with the gods. Podlecki,[238] while offering a useful summary of the various positions, also builds on Reinhardt's interpretation to argue that as the Olympians have just come to power the view of Zeus as 'tyrannical' can also be explained by the *newness* of his rule,[239] a qualification reminiscent of the kind of political theorizing present in works by political philosophers of fifth-century Athens. In summary, many scholars have included intergenerational conflict as a broad mythological theme in their discussions of the play but without fully examining specific factors such as generational loyalty or opposition between young and old. It is these factors, I will argue, that are used in a highly political way during the presentation of Zeus by the speeches of characters in the play and lead to a blurring of the boundaries between political and social.

For all the debate on issues of presentation and authorship, intergenerational conflict *is* embedded within the personal mythology of Zeus' rise to power. The opening lines of the prologue offer an immediate view of Zeus as a political power, one holding authority and issuing orders for punishment in revenge for insubordination:

> We have come to a remote region of the world, to the land of Skythia, uninhabited, a desert. Hephaistos, you must follow the instructions given you by father Zeus, to bolt this criminal to a lofty cliff with bonds hard as adamant that cannot be broken. For it was your glory, fire's blaze, basis of every craft, that he stole and gave to mortals; For such a crime he must pay a penalty to

[238] 2005, pp.34-7.
[239] p.35 & n.93 for line references.

the gods, So that he may be taught to love Zeus's Tyranny, and stop his human loving ways.[240]

Discussion now turns to how seemingly unequivocal descriptions of Zeus as a tyrant belie a number of underlying complications in relation to the transfer of power from one generation to another.[241] By way of example of the difficulties involved in such an approach, this section will offer a short review of recent comment, highlighting the potential for multiple interpretations of the play's language. By line four of the prologue a scholarly divide opens up on the poet's presentation of Zeus' regime and character. Podlecki translates *pater* as 'father' appended by 'Zeus',[242] to clarify that Kratos is referring to Hephaistos' father in a directly genealogical way rather than 'in some generic, honorific sense.' [243] By contrast, Griffith glosses the term as relating to Zeus as 'father of gods and men, sometimes kind sometimes stern',[244] giving the sense of his general political rather than specific familial authority.

The final lines of Kratos' prologue also offer further room for scholarly debate. As the mute figure of Bia stands by menacingly, Kratos threatens that Prometheus will be taught to love Zeus' tyranny.[245] Podlecki sees this phrase as an 'oxymoron, if not a

[240] 1-11. The English translation used is by Podlecki (2005) that in turn is based on the authoritative reconstructions of the original Greek by Griffith (1983) and West (1998, p.69). Points of philological discussion will turn to the Greek as provided by Podlecki in the same edition. Throughout this thesis I largely rely on the Aris & Philips series of translations as they offer a consistently even-handed treatment of the original Greek, largely free from conscious archaising or contemporising of language and are accessible to non-specialists. All Greek terms are similarly transliterated to support access for non-classicists.
[241] The task will be greatly assisted by the use of detailed commentaries such as those by Podlecki (2005), Griffith (1983) and Conacher (1980), allowing a detailed analysis of Aeschylus' deployment of language.
[242] p.75.
[243] p.160.
[244] Griffith, p.82.
[245] 10-11.

contradiction'.[246] But this assumes that our modern understanding of tyranny is that which was understood by Aeschylus' audience, allowing no place for semantic nuance. This is a surprising comment given Podlecki's earlier reflection that tyranny is in part defined by the temporal novelty of an autocrat's reign. As Griffith comments, *tyrannos* is essentially a monarchy obtained by force or cunning, not inherited; it often, but not always, carries pejorative associations.[247] These views are open to challenge and, critically, only Olympians in the play use the term 'father' to refer to Zeus. Similarly, Griffith's comments on tyranny as well as on the authority of Zeus surely marginalize the inter-generational in the play without greater discussion of the exact nature of tyranny.

While the potential for different interpretations is already clear, the repeated use of the term 'tyranny' and its cognates, which occur a total of thirteen times during the play, is significant. All but one of which refers directly to Zeus[248] and clearly frame the opening speeches within a political, rather than personal, context, particularly as the term tyranny is applied by a member of the new regime.[249] In some ways, the attempts to assign primacy to the centrality of Aeschylus' play to either the context of the experience of a new regime (Griffith) or a personal, almost familial feud (Podlecki) misses the point. These two views can be combined if instead we consider the new

[246] Podlecki, p.160.
[247] Griffith, p.84.
[248] Herington (1963).
[249] The links between the personal and the political in relation to age have been discussed by Strauss (1993) who, to my mind, unsuccessfully attempts to demonstrate in an overly reductive way that relations in the *oikos* directly reflect and reflected and influence and are influenced by those in the *polis* in relation to power struggles between fathers and sons. But there is legitimacy in the use of binary opposites to describe relationships in Greek society; works by Hall (1989) or Cartledge (2002) show how this was how the Greeks would have viewed themselves and old/young fits into this world view. The legitimacy is because the Greeks themselves thought antithetically. See Lloyd (1966).

regime as a new generation, effectively an extended family defined by their genealogical proximity to Zeus. Tyranny, in this setting, is something experienced as a process in the shift of power, in this case from an established generation to a newer one.

At this point it is valuable to widen the discussion of the concept of tyranny from *Prometheus* to its more general ancient context, as the term is used so extensively in the play and is open to a variety of interpretations. The modern semantic range for tyranny is much narrower than that of the fifth century BCE and even then the meaning had only just begun to change from purely descriptive to primarily pejorative.[250] Austin[251] charts the slightly later use of 'tyranny' by Herodotus and other later ancient scholars (such as the author or authors of the problematic '*Suda*') and produces a convincing backdrop for a growing association between Medism and tyranny that would eventually lead to the glossing of tyranny as a kind of orientalised despotism.[252] However, the realities of everyday usage of the term in mid-fifth-century Greece cannot satisfactorily be recovered and it is uncertain as to how the ancient audience would have interpreted the meaning as in Aeschylus' plays (although, Peisistratos' family had straightforwardly been displaced by the 'Theseid' democracy, so Athenians would have had very recent experience of historical tyrannies). Quite

[250] Pindar, in *Pyth.* 3.84-6, uses the term *tyrannos* to describe Heiron without making a political point on his method of governance, although it is true that, as a Theban, Pindar did not belong to the same distinctly democratic Attic culture as Aeshcylus. See O'Sullivan (2005), p.151, n.7 for a range of later sources who use *tyrannos* in a formal, status-related rather than morally evaluative way.

[251] 1990, pp.289-306.

[252] The modern tendency to assign *tyrannos* a Lydian origin is reasonable, but the case for this classification is by no means overwhelming, see Andrewes (1956, pp.21-2). West (1997, pp.579-585) also sees many aspects of *Prometheus* as indicative of influence by cultural transmission from Western Asia. Some of his observations are less convincing than others, such as the idea of the winds as winged as somehow specific to Greece and Semitic cultures. But his general thesis would support the view that concepts, such as tyranny, in Prometheus would have cross cultural, regional relevance.

possibly, the term was not yet wholly semantically negative, although perhaps increasingly suggestive of a non-democratic, foreign influenced intervention.[253] Indeed, some scholars such as White [254] have gone so far as to suggest that tyranny, in the sense of a form of government rather than a general experience, could have been considered a positive intervention when the new regime replaced a decaying or corrupt monarchy or aristocracy. Taking the example of the tyrannies of Peisistratos and Hippias, White also sees tyranny as part of a developmental progression with the form enabling the movement from Solonian oligarchy to Cleisthenic democracy.[255] Although White's view lies on shaky foundations, most notably the assumption that new tyrannies often sprang from the frustrations of a merchant class (a view irreconcilable with Austin's comprehensive survey of Persian imposed tyrants in Ionia) and that tyrannies somehow always resulted in urbanizations (also taken to always be a good thing) and growth of trade, there appears room in the debate to consider tyranny as a fairly loosely defined concept greatly contingent on context. Tyranny has also been considered as a justifiable response to a form of gang behaviour, the mafia-like rule of eighth and seventh-century ruling clans necessitating a violent overthrow,[256] and this would reinforce the potential for cycles of tyrannical shifts in power between generations. The point that emerges, albeit qualified by an ongoing refinement of the concept, is that in some way the use of violence to overthrow a

[253] Austin dates the definitive point at which the association was made as 499 BCE, at the time of the 'Ionian Revolt', but such certainty is misplaced. Foreign interference could well have been a major factor in the revolt, but this is not to say that the concept of tyranny was understood meaning 'imposed by Persia'. While he is correct to highlight the importance of the term being introduced to Greece from Asia Minor, since some cultural resonance might still linger, it is useful to consider how the term 'despot' for example is hardly used in English to refer to French authoritarian rule.

[254] 1955, pp.1-18.

[255] p.15.

[256] 'The mafia analogy…helps us make sense of the forms of oppression alluded to by ancient sources, and to explain what caused the crises which led to *coup d'etat* by tyrants all over Greece.' van Wees (1999, p.1). See also Ste Croix (2004, p.211-2) for the political and economic conditions that enabled tyrannies to emerge as a response to oppression.

regime and to replace it with another may not always have been tyrannical in the modern sense for the *poleis*' inhabitants and may have been at times the only way in which power could have been seized by one section of society from another.[257] As is already clear, some scholars cannot reconcile a ruthlessly autocratic Zeus with the more favourable god of Hesiod, but by no means does Zeus' seizure of power in *Prometheus* represent a breach with a divine world in Hesiod that can in any sense be defined as democratic. As this is the case, tyranny is the only legitimate way of changing the order of power in the heavens. The only alternative to tyranny would be unchangingness.

Tyranny has thus been abundantly discussed in terms of the concept's broad political application but as we have already seen there is an experiential aspect to the concept. Tyranny can be viewed as partly political, as rule that is un- or extra- constitutional[258] and partly the result of a pathological aggressive aspiration to rule.[259] In this light, tyranny is thus both a psychological state and a political classification, neither of which is inherently negative except when compared with competing political systems, or idealized psychologies. This bipartite form, part psycho-sociological, part political, fuses via cultural forms, in this case the form of tragedy, into a concept with an extraordinarily wide associative field. This understanding of concepts such as tyranny appears to be consistent with part of the political discourse of Athens throughout the fifth and fourth centuries. More importantly, the psychological characteristics that

[257] The reverse view of tyranny as part of a general political deterioration has also been articulated, in ancient and modern times, but generally in a theoretical way rather than from historical observation. See Pl. *Rep*. Book 8, esp. 8.562c-563c. The obvious exception is in Ar. *Pol.,* chapters 14-19, which follows Thucydides' historical narrative view of the Pisistratus' sequence of tyrannies.
[258] Cartledge, 2002, p.3.
[259] Strauss, 2002, p.67.

have been associated with tyranny appear to match those frequently associated with a younger generation, such as intolerance and a desire for conflict.[260] Literary and historical representations of characters such as Alcibiades present, perhaps, a paradigm of the young would-be tyrant. In tragedy the pairing of tyrannical rule and youthful psychological tendencies has also been identified, most clearly in the case of Pentheus in *Bacchae*.[261] The psychological conditions that act as enablers to tyranny within a tragic character appear to be linked to both youth and the opposition to older or fading authority, aspects that are clearly present in *Prometheus* but have hitherto been considered in terms of 'newness' rather than 'youth'.

In *Prometheus*, the characterization of Zeus fits this overall picture of tyranny well. Zeus's new regime is achieved through singular ambition to power (the pathological), is presented by some characters as reckless in the violence used to suppress opposition to his authority (the youth-like psychological) and results in extra constitutional rule of heaven and earth (the political). In this light, Zeus is not so much the remorseless autocrat as the unpredictable, vengeful and intemperate young overlord. Aeschylus gives us not just the 'shock of the new' but the 'tyranny of the young'. Such is the centrality of tyranny to Athens' own mythology and political history that when the term is deployed in *Prometheus,* it would be reasonable to expect the term to have the power to transform all related themes and concepts in the play, such as inter-generational conflict, into political ones.

[260] On this second characteristic see Thu. II. 8 and II. 21. Dover (1994) also offers a comprehensive overview of popular Greek perceptions of youth as 'compounded of extravagance, pugnacity, thoughtlessness, drunkenness and sexual excess' p.103, on the last characteristic cf. Io's account of her pursuit by Zeus', 640-86. See chapter 2 for this normative view of youth outside of the tragic sources.

[261] O'Sullivan (2005, pp.129-130) makes the comparison of Polyphemus in *Cyclops* to Pentheus in *Bacchae* but even here shows refers to a line in the play (43) that confirms that the tyranny of Thebes was given to Pentheus by Cadmus, an important qualification of the term.

From the prologue onwards, the political tyranny of Zeus' actions is referred to directly and frequently and is closely linked with the rise of a new regime. But there is a dissenting voice within the Olympian camp, that of Hephaistos, and it is through this character's speeches that the issue of generational loyalty (and so political unity in this context) can begin to be properly investigated. In contrast to the unqualified hostility evinced towards Prometheus by Kratos, the figure of Hephaistos appears much more sympathetic to Prometheus' plight. Whilst undertaking his task of binding Prometheus to the rock he commiserates with his charge, saying, 'But I can't bring myself to bind by force a god, my kinsman, to this stormy chasm',[262] before referring to Prometheus specifically as '…Proud minded son of Themis'.[263] This passage is curious as an open display of discontent with Zeus' actions by one of his own, particularly in light of the presence of the enforcers, Bia and Kratos. Even stranger, the genealogical address of Prometheus explicitly places him amongst the Titans as son of Themis, and not of an Olympian (Themis, as we has already been discussed, is later aligned with Gaia by Prometheus himself). The notion of kinsman, *syggenē,* cannot mean genealogical affiliation and Podlecki, following Griffith,[264] suggests that instead the term is used in reference to the two characters' similar technical background in myth and the corollary of their cultic associations in religious ritual activity.[265] That Hephaistos recognizes the painful humiliation resultant from Zeus' wrath should be of no surprise. Homeric reworking of Olympian mythology also shows the god similarly experiencing

[262] 14-15.
[263] 18.
[264] Podlecki, p.161; Griffith p.85.
[265] He is linked with inventiveness and patronage of mortals (*Homeric Hymn to Hephaestus,* West, 2003, p.203), and there is evidence that cultic activity in Athens reflected some shared rituals (Farnell, pp.374-95).

exile and torment as a result of insubordination.[266] Hephaistos is also an outcast amongst the gods, his physical imperfections marking him as inferior to his divine peers.[267] Such similarities then may go some way in explaining the use of the term 'kinsmen' as one with a shared experience. The effect is to encourage reflection on what it means to have allegiance to another, should it be along the lines of personal sympathy or familial (or more broadly genealogical) bonds, or indeed by generation. The highlighting of Prometheus' exclusion from and by the generation in power by another former victim of the new regime (but one who was brought back into the fold) also refocuses our attention on Prometheus' former relationship with the Olympians, in that he was never truly one of them in the way it counts most, i.e. by birth.

Hephaistos' powerful speech, predicting the torments the Titan will suffer ('baked by the sun's bright flame, your skin's bloom will wither')[268] is reiterated in the passage's final lines, 'Many laments and useless moans you'll utter, for Zeus' heart cannot be swayed: for everyone fresh to power is harsh.'[269] This final line echoes the speech's opening, where Kratos affirmed Zeus' reign as tyrannical in respect of its newness. Griffith goes further and refers to a passage in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* that suggests that insult is a mechanism by which one can assert superiority over others and mentions specifically that this is often the case in the young.[270] Whilst it must be noted that Aristotle wrote this work a century later and in a specific didactic context, the sentiment appears consistent with this passage: the natural tendency of the younger is towards insult and violence and the new Olympians appear no different.

[266] *Iliad* 1.590.
[267] Burkert, 1985, pp.157-8.
[268] 22-3.
[269] 33-5.
[270] Griffith, p.90; Ar. *Rhe*. 2.2.6.1378b.

Kratos' response is to cajole Hephaistos into action, first by indirect threats ('…how can you turn a deaf ear to Father's word. Aren't you afraid of that?'),[271] before he adopts a more conciliatory tone, saying, 'everything's a burden – except lordship over the gods. Because no one is free except Zeus'.[272] Swiftly, though, his menacing nature returns as he warns, 'Hurry, won't you, in putting chains around him. So father won't see you taking time off.'[273] The warning is suggestive of a childlike tempestuousness as possessed by Zeus, a stubborn refusal of reason or empathy that Aristotle would comment on years later.

A complete absence of empathy, demonstrated through tendency to violence, is a defining aspect of the new order. All of the god's agents, with the notable exception of Hephaistos, convey a sense of violent intent. The figures of Bia and Kratos are presented in a wholly negative light, as henchman of Zeus and concerned with nothing but administering Zeus' brutal retribution. Such intimidating figures have appeared elsewhere in Aeschylean work, such as the Egyptian Herald in *Suppliants* (lines 881 – 884 in particular). The violent agencies of Bia and Kratos map closely on to the 'irresoluble antagonism' [274] that the herald of *Suppliants* is central in sustaining.

In an aggressive, cruel manner Kratos prefaces Prometheus' opening monologue: 'Here, now, show insolence! [275] Plunder the gods' prerogatives!',[276] inviting Prometheus to attempt the impossible and break the adamantine chains of

[271] 40-1.
[272] 49-50.
[273] 52-3.
[274] Hall, 2009, p.208.
[275] Literally: 'hubris'.
[276] 82-3.

Hephaistos. The sneering taunt used by Kratos goes very little way in supporting any moral superiority and is another example of the Aristotlelian view of insult as assertion of authority (see above). There appears hypocrisy in the hubristic accusation of hubris by this supernatural being, a statement of irrationality and rhetorical illogicality reminiscent of spiteful insults of youth. More importantly, this hubristic utterance by Kratos can be considered reflective of the sentiment of most of the new regime and be considered directed towards the entire older generation of gods and Titans.[277] In this sense, the closing speech of Kratos is characteristic of the new divine order: aggressive, liable to insult and physically intimidate, irrational and illogical.

There has been lengthy discussion as to the exact meaning of the term *hubris* in classical Greece and precise usage appears tied to individual context. However, the term has been widely associated by scholars with arrogance and rashness of character, as we shall see. It appears likely, then, that there is something fundamentally 'youthful' about hubris (as these negative traits, arrogance and rashness, are almost always associated with youth), and that there is often an aim, conscious or otherwise, of achieving some sort of superiority over the target for insult. Fisher, surveys hubris in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, which casts hubris as partly driven by excessive action, a state commonly ascribed to youth (as well, it could be said, as a facilitating action in the assertion of a new regime) before discussing the wider views on hubristic youth in Athenian society.[278] It would seem that once one reached full maturity, hubris had much more serious consequences, in that in was closely linked to reducing the status, political or otherwise, of the insulted. In contrast, youth, by their nature, were considered hubristic. Seen in this way, the use of the term 'hubris' by Kratos is doubly

[277] Griffith, p.99.
[278] Fisher, 1992, p.20, 97-9.

significant: it underscores the relative youth of the new regime as well as underscoring the fact that the older Prometheus has made a serious political error, for which he is being punished.

The use of tyranny as a touch point for displaying generational loyalty is also demonstrated in the role of the chorus and their interactions with Prometheus in the parodos. The fear Prometheus has of the new regime's agents is displayed with the approach of the, as yet, unnamed chorus: ''Ah! What sound, what smell flew at me invisibly',[279] and then 'Aah! What now is the sound that I hear nearby, a whirring of birds? The air hisses with the faint flapping of wings; everything that comes to me brings fear.'[280] While this section of speech could potentially foreshadow the later arrival of Zeus' eagle,[281] a well-known feature of the mythic context, this view is not dominant. [282] More simply, the potential approach of another gang of tormentors is clearly a terrifying prospect in itself, a prospect that 'is evidently meant to convey the anxiety and vulnerability of Prometheus'.[283]

As the chorus come into view,[284] they utter soothing words as they reveal themselves to be Ocean nymphs: 'Do not be afraid: our loving band has raced to this rock with a rapid rush of wing.'[285] To emphasise the composition of the chorus Prometheus responds 'Aah! Children of Tethys who had many offsping and of your father

[279] 114-5.
[280] 124-7.
[281]Podlecki, p.165.
[282] Conacher p.37.
[283] Taplin p.250.
[284] The exact method of entry is disputed but given Prometheus' previous words it appears likely they would have been seen by the audience before the protagonist (Taplin, pp.252-60).
[285] 129-30.

Oceanus'.[286] Aeschylus' use of genealogy here not only places the chorus within the mythic context of the play but also allies the chorus to a generation of gods that pre-dates the Olympians.[287] With allegiances revealed here at the beginning of the parodos, the characters on stage are free to voice their opinions of the new regime and this starts almost immediately: '…new steersmen hold power on Olympos and with laws that are new Zeus wields power unlawfully'[288] claim the Oceanids, reflecting the legal terms used in Prometheus' opening monologue. The legitimacy of Zeus' rule is questioned in technical as well as moral terms. The chorus' final line in the first antistrophe is telling: 'Those who had strength before he is now annihilating'.[289] Clearly referring to Kronos, the Oceanids selectively omit to acknowledge that the same crime of which they accuse Zeus was committed by Kronos against his own father Ouranos. Just as Prometheus has damned the rule of Zeus as 'new', the chorus provide a similar condemnation on the basis of 'newness'. Commentators have supported the view of the chorus here by stating how Zeus can be nothing more than a tyrant and questioning the god's' 'legitimacy to issue binding *nomoi*'.[290] In narrow legal and *mortal* terms this is a reasonable judgment but, as discussed above, there is a divine tradition in myth of rule by force with no other legitimate form of gaining power. The Oceanids support a former regime that by their own terms would be equally as 'tyrannical' as Zeus'. This shows their case, and so that of Prometheus, to be at least in part self-interested and factional. Comparison can be made with the parodos in *Eumenides*, where similar accusations are made by the Erinyes against the new generation of gods: 'These new gods, this is how they behave, their power exceeds the

[286] 136-8.
[287] Griffith, p.115.
[288] 149-50.
[289] 151.
[290] Podlecki, p.166.

bounds of justice.'[291] In this instance, the chorus of Erinyes are depicted in a negative way and yet their accusation is the same as that of the Oceanids. Again, the accusation is prompted by diminishing power, the Oceanids via association with the defeated Titans and the Erinyes because Apollo threatens to marginalize them. Reinhardt's comments (see above, pp.87 – 89) on the 'newness' of Olympian tyranny appear applicable then to the *Oresteia* as well as *Prometheus*.

Prometheus appears as willing participant in this exchange, lamenting his fate in a decidedly unheroic way: '…I am a pathetic plaything of the breezes…'.[292] His suffering is clearly appreciated by the factional pre-Olympian chorus who respond: 'What god could be so hard hearted as to enjoy this…'[293] as a preamble to the lines that come next and which are startlingly oppositional to Zeus and directly confrontational:

> Zeus; with inflexible purpose he vengefully suppresses the race of Titans sprung from Ouranos, and will not stop until his heart is sated or someone uses a trick to snatch from him the empire so hard to capture.[294]

Again, the chorus look back favourably on the Titans and this time leave no ambiguity as to their partial conception of tyranny. Ouranos is mentioned by name, the very deity first overthrown by his own son. The chorus' final words appear to exhort others to 'trick' Zeus' authority from him, a course of action surely tantamount to tyranny by the chorus' own definition of the importance of a quasi-legal basis to rule and authority. Podlecki points out that *'palame',* 'trick', means literally 'palm of the hand' - a phrase

[291] 162-3.
[292] 158.
[293] 160-1.
[294] 164-7.

associated with violent actions - and that in Pindar the phrase appears meaning 'hand of the gods'.[295] While Podlecki sees this phrase thus to 'demonstrate negative testimony regarding Zeus from a neutral witness', quite plainly the chorus, genealogically bound to the older generation of Titans, including Prometheus, are employing naked hypocrisy. The sum effect is to show the chorus' bias towards the former, older generation via opposition to the current one, a formula already played out cosmologically in Zeus' elevation to status of ruler and Kronos' before him. Applying the chorus' logic to themselves, they can only object to the fact that Zeus rules, rather than the nature of his rise to power or execution of authority thereof. Regardless of the illogicality of the chorus' statement, their speech appears to simply reiterate that the transfer of power amongst the divine can only be accomplished through violent means.

Perhaps encouraged by the chorus' support, Prometheus engages his prophetic skills to predict that Zeus will be in need of his assistance, help that will 'rob him (Zeus) of his scepter and prerogatives.'[296] The tone of Prometheus changes from aggrieved victim to scheming avenger, his wily and stubborn character, the reason for his punishment, beginning to re-emerge as the insult of Zeus' actions bites: 'I know that he is harsh and keeps his own kind of justice. Still, I think his intent will someday be softened when he is smashed in the way I said.'[297] Prometheus' fear has dissipated and he even takes up the language his enemies have used to insult him when he says that Zeus will be smashed.[298] The chorus, already having expressed dismay as they perceive

[295] p.166.
[296] 171.
[297] 186-9.
[298] Previously deployed by Kratos at 56. Podlecki, p.167.

Prometheus as '…speaking too freely', [299] exclaiming that 'A piercing fear agitates my heart'.[300] Fear curtails further discussion but the exchange is enough to show how the negative use of tyranny by the chorus is deployed in a way to emphasise their loyalty to a generational faction.

By contrast to his daughters, Oceanus, appearing after Prometheus' account of the Titanomachy,[301] appears fearful of offending Zeus throughout his speech. While it is true that he too refers to Zeus as a tyrant, at 310, who as 'a harsh monarch wields power, without controls',[302] Oceanus offers reconciliation with the new regime: '…Zeus will grant me this gift…'[303] rather than commiseration or sympathy. The passage has been widely judged to have limited narrative importance, doing little more than emphasizing the characterization of Prometheus and Zeus.[304] There is another consequence of Oceanus' arrival, though, and that is to provoke Prometheus into reflecting on the punishments of their fellow Titans, and in particular Atlas and Typhon.[305] By expanding the scope of Zeus' vengefulness, Prometheus focuses on what has been lost by his siblings and the generational isolation in which Oceanus now finds himself. Taplin's view of Oceanus in this scene as a 'dull, foolish and ineffectual old

[299] 180.
[300] 181.
[301] 284-397.
[302] 324.
[303] 338-9.
[304] Scully & Herington (1975, p.101-2) and Taplin (1977, p.262) both question the efficacy of the scene. Lloyd-Jones (2003, p.60) challenges this view and sees both Prometheus and Oceanus as emerging with added credit. Even if this is the case, the scene feels somewhat superfluous. Even odder is the fact that the chorus, who specifically mention that their father knows they are visiting Prometheus (130), fail to acknowledge his arrival and *vice versa*.
[305] 340-76.

man'[306] sums up the fate of those not yet outcast but on the margins of power following the destruction of their generational support.

Prometheus finally breaks his silence as the other characters leave the stage: the timing of his speech is potentially viewable as both defiant and defensive.[307] Prometheus' silence can also be explained in terms of staging necessities[308] and character development.[309] The evolving presentation of Prometheus' character so far has been via third party speeches and through existing audience expectations and his muteness greatly increases the dramatic impact of his opening speech. Prometheus, as has been seen from the prologue, is not just outcast politically (in terms of the loss of power and prestige after the Titanomachy) but also socially (by his exclusion from the society of gods) and his muteness can also be seen as expressive of the inability to articulate political dissent in the new regime: any articulation of opposition can only take place outside of the dominant discourse, shaped and represented on stage by the agents of the new power. Both the political and social fabric of the divine planes has been reformed and voices belonging to the older generation have been marginalized.

'Look on me, a god, how the gods make me suffer…',[310] implores the chained Prometheus: '…such disgraceful bondage the new ruler of the blessed gods devised for me!'[311] Immediately, Prometheus introduces the moral quality (or lack of) of Zeus'

[306] 1977, p.262.
[307] Podlecki, p.163.
[308] Taplin, pp.240-5.
[309] Thomson, p.140.
[310] 92.
[311] 96-7.

authority and Aeschylus' precise use of language, using the term *aikeiaisin*,[312] frames the speech within a legal lexicon. Not only are Zeus' moral actions measured against the moral judgments of Prometheus but also against those of the wider society of the divine. The chief arbiter of justice is thus labelled unjust.

Prometheus' speech is full of regret for his circumstances, anger and defiance of Zeus' actions: 'see the outrageous torments that will grate me as I struggle'[313] and 'how long must I wait for some end of these agonies?'[314] His plaintive cries are sharply curtailed with a sudden realisation of: 'Yet, what am I saying? I have clear and thorough knowledge of all that is to come; no unexpected misery will come to me.[315] This section is notable for a number of reasons. Prometheus' *volte face* from weary dejection to rugged determination following the revelation of his prophetic powers has important implications. First, it suggests that Prometheus is no simple figure of stoic godly defiance. He is almost mortal-like in his intellectual and emotional inconsistency. His self-pity is a very ungodly characteristic. Secondly, the very sudden recollection of his prophetic powers demonstrates the limited effectiveness of this skill.[316] Indeed, for the mythic material and dramatic action in the play to combine effectively, his prophecy must be faulty or at least limited in scope of temporal reach. The alternative suggestion is that Prometheus knew the full consequences of his actions and that he would be tormented by Zeus as a result of his indulgence of mankind. To trick Zeus and suffer the results, even with mankind benefiting, and to be conscious of the results

[312] 'Outrageous torment'. Line 93. *aikeiaisin*, like the accusation of hubris, is a legal term as well as a form of insult (Griffith, p.103 and Podlecki, p.164). Prometheus thus questions the very legitimacy of Zeus' rule.
[313] 93-4.
[314] 99-100.
[315] 101-3.
[316] As commented by Gantz 'he sees far more than ordinary men, but never the whole truth' (1976a, p.40).

would suggest a masochistic pathology that would be unlikely to appeal to an ancient Greek audience.[317]

By contrast, Prometheus' fallibility as a prophet presents a much more sympathetic picture of a god not entirely in control of his own destiny. Instead, we are presented with a character of defiant stubbornness, a trait that would have been associated with the old when set in opposition to the flightiness of youth, such as in Aristophanes and particularly later in Menander. Furthermore, his prophetic abilities are also associated with older members of society. In tragedy the most obvious representation of the 'old seer' is Teiresias. In Euripides' *Bacchae*, for example, Teiresias is not just a typical old seer but his age and foresight are in direct opposition to youth and lack of perspicacity of the young Pentheus.[318] His durability in tragedy and fullness of characterization appears determined by the common association of prophecy with the old and old men in particular (with the very obvious exception of oracles).[319]

The combination of Kratos' insults and Prometheus' stubborn victimhood provides a picture of youthful bullies menacing a wise (or wily) but weaker older person, a scenario played out repeatedly in Greek comedy. In particular, this popular view abounds in the comic plays of the fifth and fourth century and is articulated most clearly in the fully extant plays of Aristophanes and most likely in *Banqueters,* if the

[317] How appealing this characterisation is now may be determined by religious inclinations, since the anachronistic comparison to the figure of Jesus Christ is clear.
[318] Eur. *Bac*. 341-371.
[319] Griffith compares Prometheus to Achilles and Hector in that they struggle to alter their futures with the knowledge of certain defeat and destruction but both of these characters are receivers of prophesised information, they do not possess the ability to prophesise themselves. As with Prometheus, the tragic element of struggle against fate would be lost if prophesy was too reliable.

fragments are an adequate indication.[320] Later plays by Menander offer similar representations of popular conceptions of intergenerational strife.[321] For all the ubiquity of such scenes of youthful rebellion, it must be remembered that such presentations are unswervingly damning of the inversion of ordinary power relations. Normal social structures are always reasserted at the play's close: men controlling women and the old controlling the young. The comedy in such scenes as the parricide's desire to strangle his father in Birds is in the corruption of the *nomoi* of Athenian life, just as in the reality reversed political decision-making by women in *Lysistrata*, or the abolition of private property in *Ecclesiazusae*. Such scenes are comic because they acknowledge the very slim potential for change in society without actually reflecting real world societal shifts.

Aristophanes seems especially concerned with youths of *ephebic* age rather than childhood and the use of characters that are young men on the verge of adult political enfranchisement allows the exploitation of many social anxieties towards youth and the inevitable drift of power from one generation to the next. As identified by Vidal Naquet in the nineteen eighties,[322] *ephebic* ritual appears to have at its core the exploration of values and behaviours in opposition to the adult world to which the rituals initiates are about to become a part. Although caution must be applied to any theorising that is underpinned by reference to the *ephēbia*, evidence for which is fragmentary at best and generally unreliable for the fifth century, conflict does appear

[320] *Birds* (1347-59), *Frogs* (149-50) *Clouds* (1321-436), *Wasps* (686). Kassel-Austin, *Poetae Comici Graeci* III.2.
[321] See Sutton (1993, pp.1-37) and Gardner (1989, pp.51-62), although caution is advised on taking a simple a view of real-life analogues in comedy. See Aristotle's *Poetics* (1448a18) for an ancient view of comedy representing characters inferior to contemporaries but recognisably believable.
[322] *The Black Hunter: forms of thought and forms of society in the Greek World,* (1986).

to be embedded within the transitional phases through a person's ages (see introduction for evidence for age transitions). However, in Aeschylus' dramatic world, Prometheus and the gods do not have some absolute age but are compared to each in order of genesis. As such, the confrontation between Zeus and Kronos (for example) is the only way in which a generational shift can take place as there is no natural generational drift. Violent overthrow on a divine plane is the only way to reflect the anxieties around transitions of power between age groups in the mortal realm. At a poetic, mythical level, the very essence of being is laid out in generation-like segments in Hesiod's ages of men in *Works and Days*.[323] This passage clearly outlines the inevitability of transitions from generation to generation until conflict between children and parents appears as the defining characteristic of life in the present, the Hesiodic Iron Age, the period of Aeschylus' authorship. The sense of a general deterioration over time appears to be applied metaphysically, socially and politically and so it is not surprising that the combination of themes of generational conflict and tyranny form a presentation of a youthful and new regime in a negative light.

There is a sense, then, that tyranny is linked to youth and the tyrannical to youthful recklessness. Even the legendary 'tyrant killers' Harmodius and Aristogiton were judged to have acted recklessly, due in part to the dishonour the young Harmodius' sister suffered, thus causing a truer and more frightening tyranny to be visited upon later sixth-century Athens.[324] Prometheus' role in bringing about an end to the tyranny

[323] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 110-200.

[324] Thu. 6.56-59, Her. 5.55 and 6.123 for a denial of their role in ending tyranny at all. Again, pathological aspects of youth contributed towards the emergence or strengthening of a tyranny. However, the legend of these two historical figures was central to the Athenian ideal of democracy, evident in the erection and later replacement of their statues in central Athens. See Brunnstraker (1971) for a comprehensive survey of statuary dedicated to Greek tyrannicides.

of the Titans, i.e. Kronos' violent overthrowing of Ouranus, reflects this cycle of a tyranny replaced by another tyranny. Later, in Xenophon, the view is expressed that the concept of tyranny, that is in its psychological form (i.e. the ruthless aspiration to power) was a legitimate pedagogical discourse, and thus associated with those brought up under the tutoring of Sophists. Strauss considers that Xenophon's *Hiero* could have been used as potentially useful instruction for young would-be tyrants and finds support for this view in Xenophon's *Memorobilia* with the ancient author making the suggestion that Socrates' downfall was in part due to his teaching about tyranny.[325] Of course, Xenophon had his own axe to grind, given his exile from Athens, and cannot be considered to reflect typical Athenian thought. But his views reflect, at least, part of a recognizable Athenian discourse.

As highlighted above, an early exchange in the play between Hephaistos and Kratos includes the use of language that can be considered closely associated with normative descriptions of youth. But it is at the end of the play, as we have it, that the most explicit use of language to define the actions of the generation of Olympians in terms of youth is found. Most starkly, the exchange between Hermes and Prometheus unfolds in a sequence of stichomythic insults reminiscent of the interplay between Strepsiades and Pheidippides in *Clouds* (see n.38). From Hermes' opening address of the Titan ('you there, sophist…'),[326] Prometheus replies, showing none of his earlier taciturnity when insulted by Kratos, 'Very elevated and full of fiery spirit your talk is as befits the gods' lackey. You are young, young in power'.[327] The repetition of young (*neon, neoi*), also used in line 960 (*neous*) is calculated to emphasise Prometheus'

[325] Strauss, p.28-9 and Xenophon, I.2.56.
[326] 944.
[327] 953-5.

seniority over Hermes and to compare the Olympian's characteristics to those unfavourable ones found in youth, such as the intemperance suggested in line 953. The insults continue and by 982 the youth-defined language is even more emphatic. Prometheus, like a world-weary old man, condescends to say, 'But time as it grows old teaches everything.' provoking, amongst continuing insults, Hermes' accusation, 'Why, you're mocking me as a child!'[328] The Titan's reply could not be clearer, or more categorical 'Well, aren't you a child, or even stupider than one?'[329] Hermes' barely suppressed rage shortly after erupts into exactly the kind of youthful hubris of which his generation of Olympians has been accused.[330] The presentation of a new tyrannical regime acting like young tyrants could not be clearer.

It is in the political upheavals that Prometheus speaks of in his version of the Titanomachy that the themes of newness, loyalty and tyranny are most clearly seen to combine. Prometheus begins his version of events with the outbreak of war amongst the gods, saying, 'As soon as the gods began their angry strife … war broke out among the various factions.'[331] Specifically, Aeschylus uses the term '*stasis*' to emphasise the civil-war-like conflict and the political nature of the intergenerational strife.[332] His speech continues to tell the story of his changing allegiances, from the Titans who 'disesteemed wily tricks and thought they could easily gain mastery through strength alone and by brute force'[333] to 'the best of the possibilities then before me'[334] that is to

[328] 986.
[329] 987.
[330] 1007-35. The line at 1012' but your excess rests on a cleverness without strength' sounds like the accusation often made by the old of the young, that they are quick to act without wisdom.
[331] 199-200.
[332] See Introduction II for Thucydides' and Herodotus' extensive writings on the conflict inherent to all forms of political succession/separation.
[333] 206-8.

'join sides with a willing Zeus'.[335] Prometheus, in what can only be considered a shameless boast, proclaims 'It was through my devising that Tartaros's cavernous blackness covers ancient Kronos with his allies'.[336] The bragging ceases quickly, though, as he then complains 'In return for such benefits received from me the tyrant of the gods made recompense to me with these foul rewards.'[337] Thus he charts his path from willing member of the faction of Titans, to a mercenary purveyor of guile and foresight allied to Zeus on the basis of accruing the greatest honour and then to his eventual fall from favour and mistreatment. The sequence of events is telling and suggests that Prometheus' cries of injustice may simply reflect those of the Titans in Tartaros, he has found himself on the losing side (albeit following his honoured role in helping the Olympians).[338] Prometheus believed he could outwit and insult his benefactor and has retrojected a story of injustice against him into his personal mythology to garner sympathy from the chorus. The Oceanids, representing the continuation of an older order of divinities, show unconditional sympathy for a Titan who rebelled (by his recent admission) against his own, inflicted a terrible punishment against them and now finds himself short on allies.

Importantly, much of this passage represents a deviation from the Hesiodic version of the battles between the Titans and the Olympians. This could be due to a number of factors: there may be other more contemporary renderings of the Titanomachy that

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[334] 216.
[335] 217.
[336] 219-21.
[337] 221-3.
[338] Considered by some as evidence for Prometheus' strategy of opportunism (Podlecki, p.168), his roguish flexibility of loyalties the decisive skill that allowed him to survive the Titanomachy unscathed (West, 2000, p.114). Griffith's view that Prometheus is prudent rather than opportunistic is hard to accept given Prometheus' own claims to have been the driving force behind the victory of the Olympians (204-15).

have not survived, the passage may be shaped entirely by Aeschylean grandiloquence or it could be that Prometheus has been made to deliver this speech in this new way. This innovation seems to emphasise that the personal conflict is less to do with an unjust and vengeful god and more a divine character who has transgressed generational boundaries. A classic intergenerational conflict has played out and he is now paying the price for his earlier betrayal of generational loyalty. The most obvious difference between Prometheus' retelling of the Titanomachy and that in *Theogony* is the very absence/presence of Prometheus. In Hesiod it is the Hecatoncheires who sway the battle in the Olympians' favour.[339] There is absolutely no mention of Prometheus whatsoever, and at line 697-731 Hesiod describes the hundred handed daemons as hurling the defeated Titans to Tartaros. Secondly, in the *Theogony* there are multiple and consistent references to the benevolence of Zeus, not just to the honours he promises to bestow (although this is also included), and this justness of character appears to galvanise the other gods.[340] Such interactions between the Olympian and other divinities are glossed over by Prometheus in his play. And finally, Prometheus gives the impression of multiple factions fighting against each other, perhaps as justification for his lack of allegiance, whereas in Hesiod it is clear that there are definite sides: Titans and their allies against Zeus and his allies.

The second part of this self-promotional speech by Prometheus is also a stark departure from the mythological textual record, regarding his relationship with mortals. Not in *Theogony*, not *Works and Days*, not in any Homeric works nor in Plato's

[339] Although some will debate which event strikes the decisive blow against the Titans (Mondi, 1986, pp.25-48) as general and principle character in the action it is difficult to see anyone other than Zeus as ultimate *strategoi* and victor.
[340] Lines 655-60, for example, 'you have been the immortals saviour from chilling peril', see also Podlecki p.168.

Protagoras is found the striking claim that Prometheus next makes. Zeus, he claims, 'wanted to annihilate the entire race (of mortals)'[341] but 'I prevented humans from being smashed to bits',[342] resulting in Prometheus being 'mercilessly brought into line, a sight disgraceful to Zeus.'[343] Aeschylus' presentation of Prometheus' relationship with mortals, in such a marked difference to other textual evidence of the myth of Prometheus' trial for theft, can be seen to emphasise the injustice done to Prometheus by Zeus.[344] However, such a clear departure from the known mythology also suggests characterization of Prometheus that communicates a tragic element of the protagonist: a once powerful and respected god whose personal mistake, his refusal to defer to any leader, leads inevitably to catastrophe. Generationally, not fitting in is tacit opposition to the values of the group of newly powerful Olympians and thus a challenge to the new hegemony.

A widespread scholarly view has been to consider Prometheus as a victim unjustly persecuted by Zeus, a hyper-authoritarian figure portrayed by Aeschylus in a deeply unsympathetic manner. The speeches of *Prometheus* at first sight appear to support this view. However, on closer inspection the presentation of the god can be considered to show not a consistently stoic figure but a flawed character whose mythological background is largely revealed only via the self-interested speeches of the protagonist himself or those aligned to him and his fellow Titans by generation or genealogy. The speeches by Hephaistos, fearful yet damning of Zeus' actions, are oddly familial and yet the Olympian and the Titan are associated by occupation only. The reason for the closeness of the relationship may be found instead in Hephaistos' own earlier

[341] 232-3.
[342] 235-6.
[343] 240-1.
[344] cf. Plato's *Protagoras*, 322a.

persecution by Zeus: he shares in a brotherhood of torment. Aeschylus' modification of the Hesiodic version of the Titanomachy, or at least the one that he has Prometheus deliver, is stark in the absolute centrality that Prometheus claims to have played in the Olympian's victory. The impression given is that Prometheus' actions and pitiful speech as designed to heighten the alleged injustice he has experienced and to distract from the generational betrayal he is guilty of. At many points his speeches verge on hubris, a fact many scholars seem to acknowledge but fail to include in their final summing up in moral favour of his victimhood, perhaps because the objects of his hubris, Zeus and his cohort, are presented in a consistently negative light.

And yet Zeus, by proxy, does appear to behave in a vicious and disproportionate way towards Prometheus. His presentation by Aeschylus seems at odds with a typically Aeschylean characterization of the gods (which in turn has led to questions of authorship). This interpretation has been driven in part by the inclusion, in parts of Prometheus' and other characters' speeches, of the word 'tyrant' to describe Zeus. Although it is true that Kratos himself describes Zeus' rule as a 'tyranny', the uncritical glossing of this word by translators and scholarly commentators without acknowledging the semantic range covered by the term in Aeschylus' time has led to the construction of the 'Zeus problem'. It surely appears to be the case that Prometheus' special relationship with mortals in text and visual art forms has encouraged later, favourable, responses to the literary character in the ancient Greek theatrical text. The acceptance of Prometheus' and the chorus' use of the term tyranny has resulted in a failure to tackle the question of how else Zeus would have come to power in the heavens other than by using violence or trickery. Prometheus and his

cohort's bemoaning of Zeus' ruthless ambition is an empty piece of moralizing: violent succession appears to be the only form of celestial succession.

Meanwhile, much has been made of the consistent presentation of the theme of 'newness' in the play, with the equation of new regimes with tyranny. Again, the next logical step of examining why such regimes may be regarded as tyrannies has not been adequately explored. The 'newness' issue is most obviously linked to the generational aspect of the Olympians' rule, here, at least, appears to be some consensus that the use of terms to define the Olympians and their behavior as youthful emphasize that succession is defined by inter-generational conflict.

However, amongst all these methodological questions of consistency, some themes do appear to emerge as consistent. These are themes of intergenerational conflict, revenge, honour, the violence of the gods and the inevitable rise of the young at the expense of the established authorities. The characters of Bia, Kratos (and later on the cynical and unpleasant Hermes) all demonstrate generational gang-like behavior in their intimidation of an older rival. Prometheus by turn exhibits characteristics of an older generation, such as the capacity for prophecy, and refers to the Olympian gods as childlike.

Other classical scholars may take this to demonstrate the possibility of a 'generation gap' in Athens, but the use of this term may be nothing more than retrojection of a concept born of a particularly modern context (see introduction). Textual evidence from other tragedies, and parallels in Mesopotamian literature, suggest that there is an enduring and region-wide anxiety about transitions of life and of exchanges of

power and control from one generation to the next. This anxiety manifests itself in fantasies, as represented in myth or poetry, that present the consequences of the inevitable replacement of a generation by the next. The introduction of the concept of tyranny by Aeschylus reinforces the sense that there is something fundamentally unjust at an emotional or psychological level regarding the loss of power, perhaps as for most of us the ceding of power and thus honour to a younger generation will always be an inevitable reality over which we have very limited and temporally bound control.

Of course, these are just some of the many themes that feature in *Prometheus*, which also include the gods' relationship with mortals or the endurance of exile and punishment. The absence of other plays in the original tetralogy is also inhibitive of a fuller understanding of the work. But plays by Aeschylus and other tragedians do offer examples of the use of intergenerational conflict as an enduring theme, over a long enough period and through a sufficient variety of contexts to demonstrate this concept as a popular commonplace of contemporary Athenian discourse. The power of *Prometheus* is to show that the violent revolutions of the gods, just like those of mortals, can result in the formation of perceptions of tyranny that are less to do with the reality than the emotional loss of a stable authority, however 'tyrannical' (Ouranos and Kronos would quite easily fit into this category). The anxiety about an aggressive younger generation, prone to violence and determined to take control, is a legitimate concern in the face of the relentless generational shift of the ages. Even the gods are shown to be subject to these forces.

Chapter 4

Sophocles' *Antigone.*

The passion of youth: the politics of age and integration

Age and authority have a complex relationship in tragedy. As discussed in Chapter 3, in *Prometheus* the authority of the new generation of Olympians is questioned in clear age related terms. There are other plays too, such as *Bacchae* or *Persae,* in which the authority of the young central character is questioned in relation to their age and psychological state. But most commonly, authority figures in tragedy are middle age-range male citizens of their polis (when they are present, that is. There are many examples of a lack of authority due to the absence of this age group. See chapter 8 in particular). The challenge to their authority, a primary theme through tragedy, often comes from some extra-community source, whether this is from an external army (*Seven Against Thebes*), divinity (*Hippolytus*) or the threat of 'the other' (Aeschylus' *Suppliants* or Euripides' *Medea*). But the challenge to authority from *within* society appears most often in the form of threats from the younger generation, such as from Orestes in the *Oresteia, Electra* in her name plays by Sophocles and Euripides or Oedipus in *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Perhaps the most striking and direct example of the antagonism between young and old in tragedy can be found in Sophocles' *Antigone*. In this play, Euripides reveals the tension between young and old in relation to political authority, but also presents a deeper concern about how to integrate different generations into the life of the polis. This chapter will consider how age is used to frame many of the play's exchanges, relating behaviour and psychological states to popular views on youth. I will also attempt to explain how an interpretation that is

sympathetic to the Haemon of the play, and, by extension, to potential Haemons of the historical period, shows Sophocles' complex characterisation of the young character to be consistent with that of a young man whose ambitions to become fully mature are thwarted.

Sophocles' *Antigone* opens with the play's namesake damning a public proclamation made by the autocrat of Thebes, Creon. The city's ruler has forbidden burial rites for Polynices, Antigone's brother, a declaration presented by Antigone as, 'the evils of our enemies…coming upon our own people.'[345] So begins the struggle by the play's characters to establish the justice and injustice, righteousness and profanation of the treatment of Polynices' unburied body. For all the strengths and weaknesses of the polar arguments put forward by Creon and Antigone - and supported, modified or distorted by the chorus, Ismene, Haemon or Tiresias – the play's antagonistic exchanges are as much about the psychological conditions necessary to rule justly and the importance of the ability 'to give and receive advice' (*bouleuesthai),* as the destructive power of unreflective moral or religious certainty.[346] In some respects, *Antigone* is not unique, since those tragic plays that present the central character's

[345] 10. Griffiths (1999, p.122) points out that, while the term *kērugma* is neutral, Antigone's speech reflects a proclamation 'that is spoken of as if it came from, or on behalf of, the citizens at large.', and Ismene suggests this is the case (79). Nevertheless, Thebes is not a democracy and Creon is a tyrant, in the classical sense, so this discussion, relating to deliberation or counsel, should not be considered as synonymous with truly democratic decision making in the modern sense, but rather as a king seeking advice from a council of elders.

[346] Hall (2012) in Ormand (ed.) Hall makes convincing arguments for the centrality of discussion of 'deliberation' in Sophocles' Theban plays and points towards the significance of how these discussions interact with issues around age and political status (p.304 and pp.312-3, in particular). The key terms that Hall discusses: *Bouleuesthai, tachos* and *orgē*, will be deployed extensively in this chapter, as will associated terms such as '*thumos*', see n.3, below. Hall also discusses *dianoia* and I add *phrēn* or the plural form *phrenes* (for simplicity, using these stems unless quoting directly from the text) to this semantic cluster as another important term regarding mental processes.

political authority as a tyrannical force, such as *Prometheus* (as discussed at length in chapter 3), can be plausibly expected to contain speeches that question the political legitimacy of autocratic rule. But in *Antigone,* this discussion takes on an extra resonance when the quality of political authority, in this case centred on the psychological ability to formulate effective policy, is said to be greatly influenced by the ability to receive and act on advice, which is highly interdependent on a sound '*dianoia*', or thought process, and control over one's emotions (*thumos*).

I shall argue that, in this play at least, Sophocles presents this ability as one inextricably associated with intellectual maturity. While the preceding chapter discussed how tyrannical political powers have been presented as 'youth-like' *(neanikos)*,[347] this chapter will consider how each of a triad of characters – Creon, Antigone and Haemon – are also presented by Sophocles using language that relates their actions to their relative ages. In particular, discussion will closely examine the language that Sophocles uses during the characters' speeches about decision-making and political authority when age is invoked to weaken or strengthen an argument. This examination is intended to help demonstrate how ideas about age and rationality were intimately linked, particularly in relation to mastery over one's *thumos*. I will conclude with an assessment of how Creon's refusal to accept Haemon's intellectual maturity results, predictably, in the young man's suicide and how the ultimate inevitability of his fate can be anticipated when considering various *nomoi* of mid-fifth-century Athens. Along the way, I shall take time to consider the historical circumstances in which such an

[347] Present usage meaning to be both impetuous and youth-like. See Dover (1974, p.103).

usual picture of youth, murderous and insubordinate and yet still sympathetic, could have emerged.

Before proceeding, the term '*thumos*' requires some consideration, having a complex semantic range over time that retains commonalities between its use in Homer and in the classical period, but also some marked differences in treatment by later philosophers.[348] In perhaps the most important work on *thumos* in the last decade, in *Plato and the Hero: Courage, Manliness and the Impersonal God,* Angela Hobbs sets out the philosophical conceptualisations of the term by Plato and Aristotle.[349] Synthesising a picture of uncontrolled *thumos* as something causing one to respond disproportionately and erratically to perceived slights, Hobbs considers the subject as having 'no internal checks, but requires the outside assistance of reason to calm it.'[350] As we shall see, character categorisation, as defined by an uncontrolled *thumos,* can be applied to both Creon and Antigone, and the outside assistance that is required could be either from beyond the emotional partition of the unconscious or from fully external agencies. Whilst discussion will remain focused on the *dramatis personae* of *Antigone*, it is also interesting to note that the two literary characters that Hobbs deploys most readily to demonstrate cases of *thumos* unleashed are Alcibiades and Achilles, who both have large literary histories of *neanikos* behaviour of their own.

[348] See Caswell (1990) for a comprehensive survey of the use of *thumos* in early epic and Koziak (2000) for an account of the term with a greater emphasis on context and wider chronological sweep.
[349] Hobbs (2000).
[350] p.38.

The various sketches and definitions of *thumos* are still open to challenge, but, in an attempt at consistency, in this chapter I will reflect the ambiguous nature of *thumos* that Hobbs points to: as a noun, it is the seat of emotion or unconscious desires, and adjectively, as a state of unmitigated emotion, often, specifically, anger. This closely follows the Homeric, poetic use of the term and thus part of the tradition from which tragedy emerged, rather than a more technical part of the Platonic construct of the tripartite *psychē* that would be less likely to be a direct expression of a widespread popular understanding at the time Sophocles was writing.[351] However, the more psychological conceptualisation does also remain fundamental: *thumos* is what drives the 'impulse to strive after an ideal self-image,'[352] a dangerous process that I will argue is at the heart of the action in *Antigone*. In short, I will use the term *thumos* referentially as a psychological, rather than philosophical, concept.

In relation to the tragic genre, successful arguments have been put forward, notably by Helene Foley,[353] that many protagonists in tragedy can be seen to be conflicted between the desire to follow their heart (*thumos*), often badly affected by jealousy or desire for revenge, and their recognition of the importance of external capacity to deliberate (*to bouleutikon* as Aristotle called it in *Politics,* book I)*,* a capacity for cognitive dissonance that is fundamental to their tragic status. Foley's argument in this instance is in relation to *Medea*, but the fundamental condition of a divided self is so

[351] Plato, *Republic*, Book 4. 435b-441c. That is not to say that philosophical terms and concepts are entirely absent from tragedy. They are not. Discussions of *dikē* or *timē* in plays such as *Philoctetes* or in the *Oresteia* bear reasonable comparison with the basic frameworks of discussion in Plato's *Protagoras,* for example. Indeed, there is significant osmosis between the two forms and Aristotle, in *Poetics* (49b27f), discusses, albeit briefly, catharsis as a psychological output that tragedy must affect.

[352] p.46. Hobbs follows this line with a quote from Adler that brilliantly articulates the capacity of *thumos* to lead people to the dark, as well as the light.

[353] 1989, pp.61-85.

widespread in tragedy that this simple tool for character analysis can be successfully applied to the investigation of many tragic characters. The main players in *Antigone*, I hope to show, are highly susceptible to this approach. More generally, reflection on how well the play's characters measure against contemporary standards of virtue will help sharpen the degree to which they can be seen to be open to age-related criticism.[354]

To return to the play's action, from Antigone's perspective, Creon's combined psychology (his *dianoia* corrupted by an inflamed *thumos*) must be faulty as he has buried Eteocles in accordance with law and custom and yet failed to do the same for Polynices.[355] When Creon enters, at 165, he provides irrefutable evidence for a deep seated hypocrisy, if nothing else. His *parodos,* announced by the chorus as, 'here comes the king…he has proposed this special conference of elders',[356] signals not his initiation of discussion, but the delivery of a fully formed and rigid pronouncement on the fate of Polynices.[357] Unwittingly anticipating the action to come, Creon proclaims: 'It is impossible to gain full knowledge of any man's character, mentality and judgement (*psychēn te kai phronēma kai gnōmēn*, arguably the visible elements of his

[354] As we shall see, Creon's own ethical framework is such that he measures himself against subjective abilities rather than moral absolutes. I take the four primary virtues to be *dikaiosynē, sōphrosynē, andreia* and *sophia*, following Dover (1975, p.66), as set out in Plato's *Symposium* (194-7). This incredible passage sets out the behaviours to which young men must aspire and is explicit in linking these ideals to youth, with the *neanikos* Eros held up as the example to follow. The first three full sections of description begin: 'he is the youngest of the gods' (195b), 'so he is young, and sensitive as well as young' (195d), 'he is very young and very sensitive' (196a). Eros is shown to be both young, in relation to the older gods, but also sensitive, which I believe means that he is intellectually mature.
[355] 21-38.
[356] 155-61.
[357] 162-210.

psychological interior), until he is tested in rule and law-giving.'[358] By the play's end, Creon has allowed us full knowledge of this range of characteristics through his repeated failure to make judgements based on anything other than his own anger and fear of the weakening of his authority. Primarily, Thebes' ruler is shown to have failed to be properly in control of his thought processes because of his 'violent tongue' and lack of understanding (that is, Creon's inability to properly communicate with others and his failure to control his own *thumos*), demonstrated when Tiresias abandons Creon to 'vent his rage upon some younger man.'[359] But these characteristics, haste and passion, anger and aggression, are also common criticisms of young men. The ability to provide or receive good counsel (*bouleuesthai*) was thought to be severely weakened by attacks of haste and passion (*tachos kai orgē*), and both Thucydides and Herodotus provide historical evidence for such views in relation to youth, most explicitly in the cases of Alcibiades, Cambyses and Xerxes.[360]

In perhaps the key scene for analysis of the psychological state of Creon, the arrival of Haemon and the *agon* that follows, concluding with the famously tempestuous stichomythia (626-780), the younger man's calm politeness and his father's extreme haughtiness are extreme counter-examples of the correct way of behaving for those of a young and an older age group. At first, Haemon chooses his words carefully, so as not

[358] 175-7.
[359] 1084-5. See fuller discussion of this line below. See also Griffiths (p.310). The repeated use of the term *thumos* in this section (1085 and 1088) reinforces the emotional rather than rational aspect of Creon's decision making. With Tiresias calling Creon 'child' (*teknon*), at 1023, the youth-like state that Creon has regressed to appears even more distinctly defined.
[360] Her. 3.36, 7.13; Thuc. 6.12, 6.38-9. At 6.15, a combined anxiety about lawlessness, tyranny and youth is presented in authorial voice. See Introduction (II) above for discussion of these passages. Of course, Aeschylus addresses this issue directly in *Persae*, with Xerxes' failure in comparison to Darius' success blamed on the rash actions of the young king. Aesch. *Persae* 739-86.

to further inflame his father's passion,[361] but Creon fails to rein in his anger in setting out his position, using harsh and sarcastic language.[362] Haemon continues to show remarkable restraint in avoiding a direct challenge his father's faulty deliberation, suggesting that 'other words might also be good',[363] that counsel is necessary for reaching a sound decision. But in the final lines of this speech, Haemon does display naivety in his use of language as he draws attention to their relative ages, he as '*neōterou*', and in his suggestion that Creon is muddled by anger.[364] The chorus' apparent attempts at neutral diplomacy, 'there have been good words spoken on both sides', serve only to cause Creon to angrily retort: 'shall men of my age be taught wisdom by one of his?'[365] By this point, any pretence of civility collapses and Creon propels the exchange towards a psychologically catastrophic climax, leading Haemon eventually to falter in the calm and tact he has shown up until the final lines of the preceding speech. Replying to Creon, and initiating the stichomythic exchange, Haemon says: 'if I am young (*neos*), you should consider (*skopein*)[366] my actions, not my age.'[367] The point appears clear: Haemon's advice is justifiable by his intellectual maturity, demonstrated by his encouragement of Creon to consider a plurality of views on how to treat Antigone, to seek external moderation. The relative ages of the two characters is important but not as important as the ability to properly consider the options, take counsel, tame the emotional urges and master one's thought processes.

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[361] 635-8.
[362] 640-80. Curiously, the chorus immediately offer support to Creon, unless they have been 'deceived by time' (*ei mē tō chronō keklemmetha*), lines 681-2. This interesting phrase reinforces both the age effect on judgement and the confusing state of the speeches where control over *dianoia* is breaking up in the older man (and the chorus, it can be argued) whilst being better controlled by the younger Haemon.
[363] 687.
[364] 719-24, 'cease from your anger and allow yourself to change.' Creon must escape from the pervasive influence of a *thumos* inflamed by anger.
[365] 726-7.
[366] This is another word closely associated with deliberation and counsel. Hall, p.302.
[367] 728-9.

Measured against the standard virtues that adult men would strive to demonstrate (wisdom, self-control, courage and justice, see n.353) Creon is found wanting whilst Haemon demonstrates all four characteristics.

The picture of 'youth' that begins to emerge is one of a psychological state rather biological age. When Creon scoffs, 'shall the city tell me what orders to give?' Haemon replies: 'You see? You sounded all too young (*neos*), in saying that.'[368] By modern standards, this is strong criticism from Haemon, and by ancient Greek standards it is outrageous. The suggestion that a father and son have somehow adopted reversed positions, in terms of the integrity of their *dianoia* and their ability to control their *thumos*, would have been a shattering insult to a Greek father, but it is all the more shocking for being manifestly true. Creon proves Haemon's point immediately when he launches into a barely coherent tirade about the outrage of his (perceived) concession of popular authority to women.[369] The final, and most extreme, provocation of Haemon, Creon's threat to kill Antigone as well, 'in the presence of her bridegroom',[370] is an act of pure indulgence in anger and irrationality and is the point at which Haemon, too, exhibits youth-like behaviour, storming off with the threat of killing himself. The *agon* might have been won by Creon, Haemon's swift departure and failure to convince his father to change course is evidence for this victory, but 'his

[368] 735.
[369] 740-66, this combination of psychic collapse and misogyny is very similar to that experienced by the autocratic Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae* (see Chapter 8), another character who exhibits some of the clear faults of youth in his inability to properly control his *thumos.* His inability to engage in proper political discussion is the primary contributor to his downfall. However, the advice given by the older men, Cadmus and Tiresias, is also suspect due to their intractable positions.
[370] 760-1.

rhetorical and moral defeat is transparent.'[371] The moral victory belongs to his son and Creon's defeat by a younger man can be taken as further proof of his psychic instability. But Haemon does not simply attempt to persuade his father, however tactfully, to take advice and so demonstrate how wrong he must be (if the correct course of action is obvious even to his son, that is). He also makes the case for the legitimacy of his own *dianoia,* regardless that he is still a *neos*. By approaching the *agon* with restraint and moral clarity, Haemon demonstrates his own maturity by way of *psychēn te kai phronēma kai gnōmēn* in the face of Creon's implacable, all-consuming rage, his *neanikos* indulgence of an uncontrolled *thumos*.

However, Creon's extreme provocation has had the effect of making the youthful *thumos* re-emerge in his son. This is clear when the chorus warn of the state of *orgē* in which Haemon appears to be,[372] addressing Creon seemingly with the aim of influencing a softening of stance. But Creon is still just as much subject to the forces of passion and haste, too, and he replies: 'let him keep on acting and thinking too big for a man.'[373] The overall effect of the *agon* between Haemon and Creon is to demonstrate an entanglement of character psychologies that cannot be easily separated by references to biological age. It seems that a youth-like psychology is likely to emerge from the midst of emotional turbulence (most usually fuelled by anger at the inability to realise one's idealised self-image) if one is not able to check inflamed *thumos* with internal reasoning or external advice. Likewise, age is not necessarily a

[371] Griffith (1999, pp.252).
[372] 766.
[373] 768.

reliable marker of ability to make decisions in a manner appropriate to those who govern.

The key to understanding what this passage might tell us about views on youth involvement in politics is Haemon's point concerning intellectual maturity, that participation in political decision-making is appropriate for those who can control their emotions, regardless of age. All characters, bar Tiresias and Haemon, up until 765, provide unwitting evidence in their speeches for why they *should not* have political involvement, but not purely on the basis of age, rather on the basis of intellectual instability, exacerbated by the refusal to seek advice that would help correct their enrapture to *thumos*, *tachos* and *orgē.* There is the danger of producing a circular argument here, but a simple formulation appears to be this: a youth-like mind, not fully capable of escaping haste and passion, cannot make rational decisions, and those who are incapable of overcoming the effects of passion on their *thumos* are destined to retain a youth-like inability to control *dianoia* that can only be corrected by the external-to-unconscious application of reason, or where this is not possible, because of the uncontrollability of *thumos*, the application of external counsel. In this respect, in *Antigone*, Haemon and Creon can be considered to have reversed the levels of intellectual maturity expected of those from different age groups, older versus younger.

Or so it would seem. This view of Sophocles' handling of both youth and the intractability of Creon is immediately challenged by the end of the episode and the

following choral ode.[374] After Haemon's departure, Creon at last concedes some ground as, when the chorus ask if he will really kill both Antigone and Ismene, he replies: 'not the one who played no part; you are right.'[375] This sudden collapse of resistance to counsel is both unexpected and difficult to explain.[376] The effect is to show how Creon has finally relented, but in a way that only emphasises his cruelty towards Antigone and the brutal condescension of his son.[377] The king acts as a tyrant who recognises he has overstepped the boundaries of what his subjects are prepared to tolerate, and so makes a strategic concession. But he is still too fuelled by anger and self-righteousness to concede the really crucial ground, that of the burial of Polynices.

Whatever the motivations for this change of mind, the chorus are credited by Creon as partly involved in his decision not to kill Ismene and their interventions do appear to have had an impact. Throughout the debate, and eventual degeneration into a slanging match, between Creon and Haemon, the chorus appear to maintain a neutral position and argue for the validity of both father and son's perspectives on the turmoil in Thebes. What is more, whilst acknowledging the potential for misunderstanding because of their age, they do point out Haemon's good counsel. Once the third stasimon begins, however, the chorus, rather than continue this approach adopt a

[374] 781-806.
[375] 771.
[376] It certainly bears comparison with Pentheus' combined softening and decline in *Bacchae*, thus forming part of a 'catabatic king of Thebes' dramatic model, and it is effective in helping to remove further unnecessary dramatic involvement of Ismene (Griffiths, pp.252-3). Brown (pp.184-5) considers Knox's view to be an exaggeration, that the scene is necessary to effect the shattering of Creon's heroic mask in order to emphasis the contrasting 'stoic' heroism of Antigone in the following episode (1969, pp.72-3). The various interpretations remain all open to challenge with no apparent scholarly consensus.
[377] Aristotle famously commented on Creon's (and Haemon's) inconsistency, his inability to properly act even when he becomes fully aware of the potential consequences of his actions (*Poetics*, Book 7.4.1454a). This inconsistent consistency was view by Aristotle as a negation of tragic character.

tone curious in comparison to that of their earlier neutrality. Now it is Eros to blame for inflaming the *thumos* of Haemon, having, 'stirred up the kindred strife between these men.'[378] The power of Aphrodite too, say the chorus, is irresistible and: 'even I am carried beyond due limits, and can no longer restrain my welling tears.'[379] But this can hardly be the same influencing force to which they suppose Haemon to be subject: they plainly feel pity or sorrow, rather than amorous love, for Antigone. This inconsistency is just one challenge to interpretation that this passage presents. Just as puzzling is the use of Eros as a metaphoric descriptor of the irrational force possessing Haemon, a view that cannot be easily reconciled with the chorus' earlier judgement that Haemon has spoken well, so well that Creon should learn from his son. The sudden denial of Haemon's rationality could be the result of a number of factors: as a reaction to Haemon's sudden angry exit, due to fear of antagonising Creon further or purely as an authorial device for re-introducing Antigone that, 'add[s] powerfully to the pathos.'[380] It could also be said that the influence on the chorus' own *thumos* by Aphrodite, as conceded at lines 803-4, results in the restriction of their perceptions to see any other possible explanation, other than inflamed *thumos*, as a cause for behaviour. The same argument could be made for Creon, that his all-consuming *thumos* has made him unable to apply rationality to his decision-making, only emotional forces. Audience responses are notoriously difficult to estimate but the consistent characterisation in the play makes it likely that the chorus' erratic and

[378] 795.

[379] 803-4. These lines, along with all others spoken by the chorus, take on a very different meaning if a director chooses to use a female chorus, such as at a recent production of *Antigone* at London's Southwark Theatre. More critically, the changed gender makes some of the speeches between Creon and the chorus impossible by the play's internal logic, such as Creon's hostility to women. If, as has been the case, the female chorus are also made to be young, the central theme of traumatic age relations loses a driving force. To me, these sorts of changes veer dangerously from artistic license to fundamentally damaging the play's dramatic core.

[380] Griffiths (p.266).

sometimes hypocritical behaviour would be relatively transparent to an audience. It is likely that the enduring impression would be of a relative rational young man caught between the tyrannical-obsessional ravings of the older Creon and the self-confessed senility of the yet still older chorus. And yet, the overall impression is of a group of old men lamenting in a conventional, traditional way in response to what they see as the typically uncontrolled *thumos* of youth, liable to uncontrollability when faced with the traditional defining characteristics of *neanikos* psychology: love and anger (see introduction I).[381] Their earlier intervention in support of Haemon is perhaps an exception brought about by the immediacy of Haemon and the persuasiveness of his speech. Once he is absent from the stage, and the older Creon is the sole auditor, the chorus lapse back into a traditional mindset. The positive voice of youth can only be heard when youth are present to argue their case, otherwise the traditional conceptualisation of youth remains unchallenged.[382]

The chorus' failure to properly recognise the human and rational from the divine and irrational continues, demonstrably, in the following fourth episode. Antigone, in what is a line heavy in irony, says: 'see me, citizens of my fatherland, taking my last road'.[383] The irony is multiple: this testament of her treatment, the chorus' witness, amplifies their failure to adequately deploy *euboulia;* her use of the word *'politai'* emphasises

[381] See also n.353. The figure of Eros is heavily associated with youth but is somewhat paradoxical, being both young, as perceived biologically and anthropomorphically in relation to e.g. Aphrodite, and mature, in behaviour. Perhaps, then, the chorus use the example of Eros as an indirect reference to their, and society's, difficulty in understanding the multivalence of youth.

[382] *A fortiori*, it could be said that the whole play has a thematic strand relating to the polarities of absence and presence, from the opening debate over the continuing presence of Polynices' body, and Antigone's decisive intervention to remove the body from sight, to the threatened absence of Antigone and Ismene from the mortal plane, and culminating in the catastrophic final presence/absence in the cave in which Haemon and Antigone commit suicide.

[383] 806.

the political disempowerment of the supposed 'council of elders'; and by using *patrias,* Antigone's words hint at a Thebes as synonymous with the dysfunctional family of Oedipus. The chorus miss the point entirely and appear unable to see beyond the simply poetic, suggesting: 'Have you not, then, won renown and praise as you depart for the cavern of death?' [384] It is as if they echo a purely Homeric understanding of psychology, that honour and heroic legacy are the primary concerns, a misunderstanding that jars violently with all that has gone before in the play. It is not long until Antigone is provoked by the chorus into an angry response, comparable to that of Haemon before his departure from the stage at the end of the second episode. The chorus, still failing to comprehend Antigone's psychological state, continue with their faulty and insulting comparisons, saying: 'it is a great thing for a dead woman even to have said that she shared the fate of the demigods.'[385] Unsurprisingly, this condescension, intentional or not, inflames Antigone, who replies: 'Oh, this is mockery!'[386] Maintaining their condescension, the chorus then place all the blame for the disastrous state of affairs in Thebes on Antigone, addressing her using the word *teknon* and so emphasising their view of her failure as due to her youth, later blaming her downfall on her *orga*, her, *'*self-willed temper', in another stereotypical outburst on youth.[387] Time and again, the understanding of young people in the play by the older chorus, appears unable to break out from popular negative constructions, regardless of external empirical evidence to the contrary.

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[384] 817-8. The Greek, here, means that it is difficult to accurately judge the tone of the chorus, whether they are offering negative statement (Knox, pp.176-7, n.8) or some form of consolation (Griffiths, p.267). When considered against the chorus' ability to formulate a realistic picture of Antigone's motivations, these different interpretations are irrelevant. In the absolutely clearest terms, Antigone does not wish for praise or glory, only justice, albeit on her own, narrow terms.

[385] 836-7.

[386] 839.

[387] 852-75.

With Antigone's fate sealed, the arguments of the younger characters appear to be defeated in the political arena, even though morally superior to the spurious arguments of Creon and the chorus. However, the entrance of Tiresias, at 988, throws sudden doubt on the outcome of the play, and presents an insurmountable challenge to the validity of Creon's process of *dianoia* and the legitimacy of his rule. Tiresias' opening words are predictably prophetic: 'we have come on a shared path, two seeing with the eyes of one; for it is thus, with the help of a guide, that the blind must walk.'[388] The advice is thinly veiled: that the correct path is one taken through cooperation, not by a narrow unilateralism. The theme of duality is embodied, literally, in the presence of Tiresias' guide, a young boy. The effect on the spectator of this tandem-character is striking, the use of a young boy as guide, telling. Rather than give the impression of Tiresias as just another old man with an opinion, the mutual dependence of the very young and very old effects the complete removal of this dual character from the discussion of deliberation and valid psychological states for taking decisions from the perspective of age groups. Tiresias-and-guide appear completely outside the framework of age relations (befitting the prophet's generic role as mouthpiece for the gods) and are thus external to the societal values placed on roles associated with age.[389] Tiresias, with his inestimable age and association with divinity is transcendentally, rather than conventionally virtuous.

[388] 988-90. As a blind character, it is uncertain who Tiresias is addressed on stage, but as a message to the audience, it is clear that advise is a contribution towards the ongoing discussion of the best approach to decision making in the *polis*.
[389] The inter-dependency of the two is emphasised at 1012-14, when Tiresias comments: 'I learned from this boy…for he is my guide.'

At first glance, Creon's response confirms his acceptance of Tiresias' counsel, saying: 'I have not neglected your advice in the past',[390] a strangely accommodating statement that is notably at odds with the evidence for his (one way) discussions with all other characters of the play. In fact, the Greek word used here that is translated as 'advice' is *phrenos*, a term that can be used to mean 'thinking' but is also, literally, a part of the body (the midriff or diaphragm, correlative with the English term 'guts', suggesting an intuitive rather than rational correspondence) and was associated widely with the physical seat of human emotions.[391] Creon, therefore, is not willing to concede to Tiresias the position of full counsel, but he does accept that he has been open to his 'thinking', as an indirect concession. What is more, *phrenos* is closely related to an emotional process, not necessarily to do with rationality. Creon, in defence against appearing to be swayed by opinion, admits only to being influenced by Tiresias' own, perceived, emotional state of being. When Tiresias makes his argument that Creon is poisoning the city by his *phrenos*,[392] he offers direct advice, saying: 'consider these things then, my child',[393] and, 'it is most pleasant to learn from one whose words are good.'[394] The advice, offered in this overtly age-specific way, is too much for Creon to bear and he responds with a similar fury to that he earlier directed at Haemon. Just as in that earlier exchange, he is also quick to retaliate along age lines, replying: 'old man, you are all like archers shooting at me',[395] with a tone it would be probable to assume, is both sarcastic, in the use the nominative '*o presbus',* meaning old but commonly understood to mean venerable, and intended to highlight the potential faultiness of

[390] 993.
[391] LSJ, 2007, *phren*- 2-4, p.768.
[392] 1015.
[393] 1023.
[394] 1031-2.
[395] 1033. The identity of 'you all' is open to interpretation, but the effect is to present Creon's petulant behaviour in a *neanikos* light.

Tiresias' judgement based on age (cf.681-2). This turnaround from the opening pleasantries between the two offers further evidence for Creon's fragile *thumos*; a psychological state apt to degenerate into an uncontrollable state of *orga* at any slight suggestion that he reflects on his own faulty *dianoia*. Still, Creon doesn't reject Tiresias' suggestion outright that: 'the best of possessions is good counsel.'[396] Rather, he retorts with the insult that this suggestion is as true as: 'foolishness is the greatest bane,'[397] an angry response that seems designed to help Creon avoid engaging with real debate. Creon's mental state continues to prevent him from engaging with any sort of rational argument. After delivering his devastating prophecy, Tiresias delivers an equally devastating verdict on Creon's present state, an invective worth quoting in full for its summarising qualities:

> Boy, take me home, so that he may direct his anger at younger men, and learn to keep a quieter tongue and a better mind than the mind which now he bears.[398]

Quite simply, Tiresias frames Creon's entire current psychology in relation to age. He refers to four generations (the boy, younger men and indirectly to himself and Creon) and so the entire male population at Thebes (of course, Tiresias is ancient, but can be considered to also represent, generally, the City's elder male population who, as we have seen, are also very conservative in their values. In respect of the gods they would no doubt share Tiresias' view of the desecration of Polynices' body, but they are too afraid to challenge Creon, as demonstrated in the lines immediately after Haemon departs the stage). In this full spectrum of masculinity it is not the boy or the young

[396] 1050, *euboulía.*
[397] 1051.
[398] 1087-90.

men who are febrile in respect to their *thumos* but the ruler of the city. Worse still, this anger has lead him to lose control of his *logos*, Tiresias says he must keep a quieter tongue. Creon's wayward speech has resulted in an inability to participate in proper counsel, and all of this has combined in an aggressive and erratic pattern of *phrēn* leading to the perilous situation in which he now finds himself (as revealed by the preceding prophecy). Creon's, and to some extent, the city's fate has been sealed by the combination of behaviour and irrationality that has been clearly labelled early in the play as *neanikos*. Ironically, for all the positive presentations of the young but un-youth-like, it has taken the oldest inhabitant of Thebes to point this out directly to Creon in a way that actually has some sort of psychic impact. Creon almost immediately afterwards exclaims: 'my mind (*phrenas)* is troubled.'[399] Age, again, is related to rationality and maturity: Tiresias only delivers his knock-out blow prophecy after his attempts at gentle persuasion are ineffective. It is this superior ability that sets him apart from the chorus, a maturity of *phrēn* that allows tactical deployment of different types of argument.[400]

[399] 1095. Haemon's earlier speeches have a remarkably similar pattern to those of Tiresias'. However, while both Haemon and Tiresias depart with insults (cf. lines 764-5 and 1087-88, which are almost identical in tone and meaning), the prophet occupies a different political strata, elevated by his unique ability to engage with the divine, and he does not share the fears of the chorus.

[400] The older chorus are locked into a mindset reflecting the ancient values of honour and shame that are only distantly related to the more personal values of human justice Antigone represents. In this respect, the chorus and Creon represent an older, more traditional psychology, one that elevates personal honour above all other concerns. Haemon and Antigone, on the other hand, seem to promote views on justice that are less grandiose and more tolerant of a plurality of perspectives. Indeed, it is the social construction of the psychology of youth that is used to explain the behaviour of Antigone and Haemon by the older characters, and yet the actions and speeches of the younger characters are demonstrably countervailing of this popular negative view of youth, being measured and controlled rather than impulsive and emotional. The *neanikos* move to the use insults by the older men, and their obsession with shame and honour, cast them in the psychological role of youth. The constant reiteration of the importance of justice and popular opinion by the younger cast reveal the emergence of a new adult psychology of politics, of democracy and universal justice, rather than personal honour. Effectively, the play can be considered to point

The case begins to build again for the characterisation of Haemon as a democratic voice of reason besieged by the forces of tyranny (Creon) and the rigid, traditionalist views of the chorus. This proposition faces another serious challenge by the play's climatic section, beginning with the shattering news delivered by the messenger that Haemon has taken his own life. At 1177, the messenger proclaims: 'He (Haemon) killed himself, in anger with his father for a murder,' before going on to recount the scene within the cave to which Creon had banished Antigone, and to where Haemon had travelled after departing the scene in anger at 765. According to the messenger's story, before Haemon's suicide:

> The boy, glaring at him (Creon) with wild eyes, spitting in his face and making no reply, drew his two-edged sword. His father rushed out in flight and he missed his aim. Then the wretched boy, enraged with himself, pressed his body down upon the sword.[401]

This extreme behaviour has traditionally been explained as an eruption due to the grief that Haemon felt for the death of Antigone and shame at his attempt on his father's life, together manifesting itself in the punitive self-death that will cause pain to Creon.[402] Emphasis has been placed on Haemon's action, but the preceding lines, the messenger's reported speech by Creon, deserve much closer attention than has been given. Only in this way can the underlying drivers of Haemon's *dianoia, phrēn* and

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at which the fully fledged democracy of Athens of the period attempts a complete cultural articulation of the ideals of the new political system over the older order. For fuller discussion of the relationship between society and politics in relation to youth and its social constructions, see introduction II. For the impact of political changes on group identity, see Osborne (2010, pp.27-38) and Davies (2004, pp.18-39).

[401] 1231-9.

[402] Garrison (1995, p.115).

psychological states, and their relation to intellectual maturity, be correctly understood. It is, ultimately, external forces that lead to Haemon's suicidal behaviour, the definitive self-enacted social exclusion, and these are from two sources: the imposed values of Creon, and the values of society at large.

The messenger reports that Haemon's actions follow Creon's words: 'unhappy boy, what a deed you have done. What came in to your mind? What disaster destroyed your reason?'[403] Even after the change of heart that Tiresias appears to have affected at 1095 (see above), Creon continues to look for some external source of all that is wrong in Thebes: Antigone's death, supposedly, is Haemon's fault. By asking 'what comes in to your mind (*noun)*' Creon continues in his refusal to engage with Haemon's opposing views, stating, indirectly, that this is because his son's reason has been destroyed. What is more, Creon again uses age-specific language, referring to Haemon as 'boy', and even worse, in the following line, as *teknon*, or child. Relations between father and son appear to not have progressed beyond those of lines 631-765, Haemon's defiance is rendered by Creon into simple unreasoning rebellion by an emotional young man whose views are the product of faulty *dianoia*.

Suicide in tragedy is a fairly common event but *Antigone* is unique in the triple killing that occurs at the play's ending. Superficially, and to modern eyes, the deaths of Antigone and Haemon, by their own hands, could seem to prefigure later famous suicides, such as in *Romeo and Juliet*, as the paradigm of young doomed love. It can be said that Sophocles, like Shakespeare, presents a world in which his lead characters

[403] 1226-9.

cannot properly integrate into their societies with all their restrictions and taboos, and thus suicide is an inescapable fate.[404] Social exclusion in some form *is* a contributing factor but the motivations for suicide are more than solely due to romantic grief, especially for Haemon. A brief excursus on suicide is necessary to further contextualise Haemon's behaviour at the end of the play when he makes an attempt on his father's life before turning his sword on himself.

Suicide in the classical world was considered in a very different way to which it is understood today and between different ancient cultures suicide was distinguished by method, gender, agency and motivation.[405] Suicide could, and was, considered as honourable, or even heroic, in certain circumstances in classical Greece (the example of Sophocles' *Ajax* being paradigmatic in this respect). Haemon's actions must not be viewed against the predominant, post-Christian conceptualisation of suicide as a serious taboo, a view that came about many hundreds of years later.

Suicide in ancient Greece was a gendered affair and male suicide by means other than a weapon would have been extremely dishonourable, making Haemon's use of a sword significant.[406] The fact that this is the sword that moments earlier would have struck his father imbues the symbolism with an additional generational dimension:

[404] Shakespeare had almost certainly read the Latin version of *Antigone* by Thomas Watson, *Sophoclis Antigone* (London, 1581).
[405] Garrison (1997, pp.1-33, p.25) discusses the various gradations at length and makes the important point that both Herodotus and Thucydides avoid making moral judgements about suicide, rather 'they leave us with the sense not that suicide created "moral revulsion," but that it provided people with an honourable release from an undesirable life.'
[406] Loraux (1987) discusses at length the gender-specific methods of suicide. Women, it seems, were at least in the fictive world of tragedy allowed a greater variety of means of escape from the mortal world, hanging and falling from a height the most common methods.

Haemon's defeat in using reason to persuade his father is as a defeat in battle and the only honourable course of action for the defeated soldier is death. It is not clear how exactly Haemon strikes himself, but the manly way of administering the mortal wound would be to plunge the sword into the guts or *phrenes*.[407] As discussed above, this is the physical seat of the psychological of which has been a central thread of discussion in the play. Haemon, symbolically and physically destroys his bodily and psychic *phrenes.*

The masculine aspect of Haemon's suicide can also be understood within the general context of the character's suggested marriage, or anticipated marriage, to Antigone. The suicides of Eurydice and Antigone have been explained as a response to the impossibility of these characters' integrations into society.[408] The same can be said of Haemon in respect of a number of barriers to integration, particularly integration to adult male society. If Haemon is to marry Antigone, then he would have a number of important roles to carry out. Most pressingly, in the dramatic context, he would be compelled to help bury Polynices, as failure to do so would be an irreparable stain on his reputation as the only existing male relative.[409] In Creon's dismissal of Haemon's questioning of the decision not to bury the body, Haemon's future capabilities as a male head of household are massively undermined. Haemon's ability to forge an

[407] In *The Trachiniae*, Deianira also kills herself in this way (930-1). But as Loraux (pp.54-6) has pointed out, Deianira is desperate to uphold martial values after she realises what she has done to the ultra-martial Heracles. At 931, Deianira is said to have struck her '*phrēn'* or midriff.
[408] Garrison (p.119). More generally, Garrison argues that suicide is a response to external social forces and that suicide is often carried out in a way that allows social structures and values to continue, rather than as a challenge (pp.32-3).
[409] Dem. 43.578. From another oratorical source, if indeed the speech was ever delivered, it is difficult to imagine an audience hearing Lysias' *Against Eratosthenes*, especially at 12.96, without reflecting on the tyranny of Creon and comparing his mythology with the actions of the Thirty Tyrants in their refusal to allow proper burial.

independent path, with his own thoughts and ability to decision-make, is also challenged by Creon. Effectively, Creon is obstructing his son's path to full adulthood by denying him the ability to marry and carry out his duties and by denying him a voice within society. Creon is only able to see Haemon as a difficult son, rather than as an individual in his own right (the cave in which Haemon and Antigone take their own lives can be seen as a desperate recreation of an *oikos* in which they would have shared an adult life together, if only they were considered as adults).

By the play's end, the young protagonists are dead, as is Haemon's mother. The society that is left, after the pre-narrative deaths of Polynices and Eteocles and, as we latterly discover when we hear about Eurydice's suicide, Haemon's own brother Megareus (1303), seems to be one that is dominated by older men and is well on its way to annihilation as a consequence of this generational absence. Sophocles presents a society that has failed its young people, even when they have demonstrated the validity of their membership of that society through intellectual maturity and the foresight to see the consequences of their actions (their inability to integrate due to the tyranny of Creon), and the actions of others (the punishment of Creon through the destruction of his family line and resultant inability to maintain a tyranny). This is an astonishing world that Sophocles has created and markedly different from the less favourable views of youth in tragedy that have gone before, and, as I will demonstrate in later chapters, will return in later years of the fifth century. It is astounding that Haemon can be considered as such a sympathetic character when his actions in the play show a young man who undertakes a litany of outrages against his father, including attempted murder. But this superficial view of Haemon as a wayward youth

simply will not do: the wider context of the play reveals a young man using all means available to him to prevent his father from carrying out further atrocities that will harm the whole community at Thebes.

How, then, would the ancient audience of this supposedly prize-winning play have reacted to this characterisation? This is a question to which there are no certain answers, but a brief review of the historical setting of the performance does shed some light on the political background in which the play was performed and allows the formulation of a tentative explanation for this puzzling view of youth.

There is continued and unresolved debate around the dating of Antigone and the marginal consensus that the play was performed at around 442-1 has been challenged in recent years.[410] In some ways, the exact date is of relatively minor importance when considering the general state of being at Athens in the mid-fifth century BCE. As set out in introduction I, no attempts will be made to compare features of tragedy with specific historical events, but the general social milieux in which the plays were performed will be considered to have permeated the shaping of plots and character development, which in turn will have been relatable to some empirical reality by the plays' audiences. In this respect, it is the general political and social realities of Athens of the period between the Persian and Peloponnese Wars that is important, and the three decades of Periclean hegemony in particular, that is 462-431.

[410] Brown settles for 442/1 (1993, p.1), as does Griffiths (1999, p.1). Scullion (2002) suggests an alternative date of 450, largely based on the absence of *antilabē,* a metrical feature of later Sophoclean works, following the suggestion by Lloyd-Jones.

This is a period of relative stability in Athenian history. This is not to say that there were no periods of turmoil, far from it. The continuing fall-out from the Persian Wars, sowing the seeds of Athenian imperial expansion and a concomitant growth in the hostility between Athens and Sparta, meant that military engagements between the city and other *poleis* continued with regularity. But the nature of military action, with Athens in an increasingly ascendant position, meant that there was little real danger of a repeat of the destruction of Athens, the terror that was visited on the city before the battle of Salamis in 480. In brief, Athens was a city high on confidence, flush with wealth from the relocation of the Delian League treasury in 454 and experiencing a form of democracy that severely weakened the power and influence of aristocratic families to the benefit of the wider citizenry in Athens. These notable historical features, I suggest, led to changes in society that enabled a softening of the traditional views of youth. In earlier, pre-democratic Athens the traditional view of youth was that young people were celebrated for their physicality but viewed in less favourable terms when considering their intellectual abilities and control of their emotional states (see introduction I).

The democratic reforms introduced by Cleisthenes at 508/7, followed by the introduction of ostracism some decades later and the reforms of the Areopagus by Ephialtes in the late 460s all contributed to a strengthening of democracy that directly undermined and weakened traditional patriarchal power structures. Formerly, these restricted the greatest political power to a number of families who would pass this power down through their own family/generational lines. The result of the political

changes was the dispersal of political power through the community and a diminishment of obvious hereditary political power.[411] As a consequence, the younger generation (aristocratic youth, that is) had come to be seen, and identify themselves, as a distinct group within society, rather than as a sum of individual would be heirs to power from political dynasties. The great paradox here is that it was Pericles, supposedly the political protégé of Ephialtes, who would become the most prominent name of these new democratic values and that his rule, which arguably resembled a tyranny in his consolidation of power and length of authority, defined this period of stability.[412]

The impression of relative stability presented itself most obviously in less intensive military activity, resulting in a weakened emphasis on youth as part of a large war machine that would have been the case during the Persian Wars (and is evident from Thucydides during the Peloponnesian Wars, see introduction II). Furthermore, the changes to citizenship requirements, introduced by Pericles, according to which full citizenship could only be bestowed on those with Athenian mothers and fathers, led to a much tighter definition of identity with the state and consequently a further diminishment of identity by family.[413] In combination, identity would appear to have become something that was defined by other social factors and, in relation to present discussion, age groups would have been one such identity defining category (see

[411] See introduction II above. There are vast doxographies of scholarship on Athenian democracy and its relation to changes in power structures, but a seminal work remains Josiah Ober's (1996) *The Athenian Revolution*.
[412] Interestingly, it was Pericles who acted as *choregos* for Aeschylus' *Persae*, a play that uses highly critical language to describe young people. In 472, Pericles would have been a young man, only just eligible to attend the Boule and most likely still barred from holding higher office due to his age.
[413] Davies (2004), a book chapter reprint of the author's 1978 journal article.

introduction I, above, particularly in relation to Mannheim's theory of 'generational units.'). This, I suggest, may have been a honeymoon period for youth, this group, since a distinct category was beginning the take shape and benefit from relative stability that softened societal views of a political marginal group that would attempt to assert and justify its involvement in political decision-making.

It is against this backdrop that Sophocles' *Antigone* was probably performed, where a combination of new social factors, generated by political changes, may have allowed a softening of traditionally negative views on youth. At times of political crisis, young male characters like Haemon would be considered as representative of danger to traditional authority and yet youth in the play appears not as a destructive force, but as a possibly redemptive one: plurality and democracy are supported by the young characters while the old authoritarian and narrow politics of Creon, supported by the older chorus, are symbolic of the danger of disenfranchising younger members of society. This picture is all relatable to the stability of the real world symbolised by the figure of Pericles. Through the character of Haemon, Sophocles demonstrates that intellectual maturity is not necessarily linked entirely to age and that the failure to recognise a young man's virtuous abilities poses a risk of failing to integrate that person into society. This social exclusion, subsequently, leads to radical behaviour in the young who then turn to conform to age stereotypes in the most extreme way, and in so doing contribute towards their own annihilation and the destruction of their society. The tragedy of *Antigone* is the unavoidable death of youth when they cannot be integrated into their community, specifically through acceptance into adult society. The risk reflected in the real world is that political disenfranchisement of the young, at

a time when there were more young people in Athens with a greater sense of group identity and no major war requiring their sacrifice, had potentially very serious consequences for society. The democracy therefore had to find a way to accommodate this new social category. All this happened in a period dominated by the figure of Pericles who, to begin with at least, represented the thrusting power of a new generation. Whether it is Creon's *psychēn te kai phronēma kai gnōmēn* or the traditional virtues set out in Plato's *Symposium,* if these values appear to be somehow prohibited to young people, due to the condition of age, then that community is taking a massive gamble on how well young people will integrate into society, if, indeed, they choose to do so at all.[414]

[414] The dangers of excluding, or at least discouraging groups from full political participation is well set out in Carter's (1986) *The Quiet Athenian*. In tragedy, in *Ion* by Euripides, the titular character articulates such a discouraged view (585-647), powerfully making a case for non-participation in politics.

Chapter 5

Euripides' *Heraclidae*:

The cult of the young warrior

Euripides' *Heraclidae* is a regrettably understudied play, having only recently received partial rehabilitation from a state of summary disregard in the nineteenth century.[415] The play's marginal status within the Euripidean canon could be explained away by the undoubted structural problems and a large number of possible lacunae. [416] Yet the play offers a compelling picture of the political and social tensions in a *polis* facing war, is often darkly humorous and, unusually, presents a fictional Athens in a less than positive light. These facets of the play can be seen as a dramatic mediation of the tensions at a historical Athens that would shortly send its young men to fight and die.

Furthermore, the play also carries a paradox in that it contains speeches on the importance of protecting the young whilst, at the same time, conveying themes that seemingly promote martial values in young men, to the extent of endangering their lives, in order to protect the glory of former times or generations. And echoes of Athens' glorious triumph over Persia at Plataea, Salamis, and particularly Marathon, reverberate throughout the play. They do so directly, through the setting of the action at Marathon, and more obliquely through the central theme of comparison between current status and past achievement. Close reading of *Heraclidae* also presents the possibility that Euripides has smuggled a highly subversive, and to youth hugely

[415] Allan (2001, pp.21-2).
[416] pp.35-9.

provocative, sentiment into the play's action. This subversion, manifest in the play's invocation to youth to fight whilst following a narrative arc that renders youth useless, creates the uncertainty about what exactly should be expected of generational relations at a time of war.

In this chapter, I will attempt to contribute to the rehabilitation of the work, most recently supported by Wilkins (1993) and Allan (1984), by investigating how *Heraclidae* can be read as shedding light on an idealised, but narrow, view of youth at a critical point in the history of Athens, a period when anxiety over the future of the city and the fate of its young men became entangled with the politically expedient evocation of past glories to affect a mood of militarism. [417] The approach will begin with an assessment of the play's historical context, in order to provide evidence for contemporaneous, normative views on youth that, I will argue, are echoed throughout the play. This synchronic approach will also appraise the sorts of historical parallels that may have been in the minds of the Athenian audience, allowing an estimate of the play's date on the basis that the historical allusions are deliberate and specific. I will analyse the character of Iolaus with particular reference to his mythological association with youth and martial values, and offer an interpretation of what this means for his position of protagonist in the play.[418]

[417] Wilkins provides support for the historical parallels between the action of *Heraclidae* and the opening salvos of the Peloponnesian War (1993), and the social importance of youth in the play (1990), but doesn't connect the two arguments in any substantial way. In part, I hope this chapter will demonstrate that for discussion of literature associated with ancient Athenian democracy, the sociological and historical combined to reflect the political.

[418] From the surviving fragment of Aeschylus' play of the same name (361R), we are unable to realistically reconstruct similarities to Euripides' play, not least in terms of the place that the concept of youth had within the tragedy. The only really clear conclusion that can be drawn

Iolaus is a character that represents former martial *aretē* and I will assess the importance of this representation at the time of the play's production when Athens may well have looked back to previous military successes for inspiration and confidence ahead of the first blows of war with Sparta. Assessment of Iolaus will include a brief review of the sources relating to his cult associations and examination of how these became related to youth. Although counterintuitive, focus on the character of Iolaus will help to create a picture of the ideal warrior-youth, through the abilities that at first Iolaus appears to have lost. The handling of this character by Euripides lends *Heraclidae* much of its humour. Yet by reversing expectations of old and young in society, Euripides is also able comprehensively to interrogate the political and societal roles of different generations.

In summary, I intend to demonstrate how *Heraclidae,* like Sophocles' *Antigone,* is deeply political. But in contrast to discussion on that earlier play, investigation will focus on the handling of youth who are absent from *Heraclidae*, rather than those who are central in *Antigone,* reflecting the plays' respective historical contexts. The overall goal will be to show how *Heraclidae* presents an idealised view of the role of youth in a time of war, shaped both by political expediency and fixed within Athens' own mythological-historical view of its defeat of Persia in Attica (that is, that contemporary politics shapes the national historical narrative for utilitarian purposes), and as a reflection of the play's contemporary historical context. I will argue that this demonstration in turn supports the thesis that youth in tragedy, or concepts

from the fragments is that the character of Heracles featured, most likely as the protagonist with Iolaus occupying a diminished role, if included at all. See Sommerstein (2009).

associated with youth, are presented in response to the dominant political mood of a play's historical context, whilst in turn forming part of, or questioning, Athens' own evolving self-definition and narrative of self.

First, then, consideration must be given to the play's historical context. A brief review will establish the range of political pressures on youth at the time of the play's production. That is, it will establish how life in the *polis* was affected by various events that would have shaped, modified, distorted or amplified normative views on the role of youth. The date of *Heraclidae*, like many of Euripides' play, is hardly secure, but a production of 430, at the outset of the Peloponnesian War, suggested by Zuntz (1963) and supported by Wilkins (1995, p.xxxiv) and Allan (2001, p.56), seems best supported by recent scholarly opinion. However, much of the evidence for production of this date is metrical, an imprecise method of dating, and others have calculated more cautiously, on the same metrical data, a later first performance of sometime between 430 and 426.[419] As I will argue, the play draws on the factors that would have been at work during the opening, rather intermittent stages of the Peloponnesian War. For the purposes of assessing the relationship between this political and social milieu and themes in the play, it is proposed to settle for a short possible date range, rather than a specific date.[420] I will follow the rough estimate of production between 430-426 and review the social and political factors in action at Athens in relation to youth in the first years of the first invasion of Attica by the Spartans. As I will argue, the use of

[419] Cropp & Fick (1985, p.23).

[420] To me, it is inconceivable that social factors were so dynamic as to exist in one form only for the time it took to write and produce *Heraclidae*. Dating, then, is useful in so far as it allows an understanding of the political climate, rather than social weather: the mood of the year, not the topics of the day.

Demophon as leader of Athens may suggest that the play was produced following the death of Pericles, and if this is the case the play comes from a period of great uncertainty in Athens; during or after the plague, after Periclean hegemony and after 429 BCE. This period is attested most fully by Thucydides and from his work we have sections of major importance that correspond to the historical period: from the first year of war and Pericles' funeral oration, through to the Mytilenian Debate and stasis in Corcyra. These sections cover the period from the summer of 431[421] to the end of the summer of 427, the most likely period during which Euripides would have composed the play if it was performed at the earliest at the City Dionysia in the spring of 430 and no later than the same festival of 426.[422]

According to Thucydides' account, the role of young men would have been at the forefront of both the Spartans' and the Athenians' minds in 431-30. In Book ii, 20.2, Thucydides suggests that the Spartans even planned their military strategy around the large population of young men, '*neotēs*', in Athens who had yet to experience war, and so might rashly rush out to battle. Regardless of the likelihood that Thucydides would have been an unreliable reporter of Spartan intentions, this passage suggests that the response of young men to their first taste of war was of concern in Athens, as projected on to the mind-set of the opposition by Thucydides. Indeed, it is in the following section that reference is made to the outrage felt by the young men of Athens and their tendency to impulsiveness.[423] Although this view of youth is mildly

[421] 2.19, 'The invasion began about eighty days after the affair at Plataea, at mid-summer, when the corn was ripe.', to Book III, 3.85, English translation of Thucydides by Warner (1954)
[422] The slightly later *Archanians*, by Aristophanes carries some very similar themes and belongs, in my view, to the same historical context.
[423] A common enough trope, see introduction I. In a curious passage (2.22.1), Thucydides explains that the young had not had yet experience of their lands ravaged by an invading force,

critical of the behaviour and the vulnerability of the young soldiers, and their youthful inexperience and liability to manipulation, young men clearly constituted an important part of the military capability of the city. This military capability is later put in a generational contact when, at 2.35-6 Pericles sets out the inter-generational aspect of Athenian exceptionalism, that each generation has added to the glory of the city. This may appear a common enough platitude, but what is said is that each successive generation is dependent on the one that precedes it for material wealth, and for the following generations for honouring the glory of their forefathers.[424]

As we shall see, in effect, Pericles, through Thucydides, provides an interesting comparison with the actions of Iolaus and Demophon, who refer to themselves and

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and that the old men could only remember the invasion of the Persian, decades earlier. The question must be asked: where were these old men when the Spartan king, Pleistoanax, invaded fourteen years earlier, as stated in the preceding passage (2.21)? Whatever the explanation, when Thucydides refers to 'The Athenians', as in 'The Athenians remembered the case of the Spartan king Pleistoanax', he is clearly referring to a particular age group and I would suggest it is those actively involved in public office, that is, those over the age of 30 but below the age of veteran of the Persian Wars.

[424] Although possibly apocryphal, certainly parodic, Plato's *Menexenus* repeats these arguments in terms explicitly linking expectations of young warriors to the heroic events at Marathon, Salamis and Plataea (246d-248d). More recently, the experience of Russian soldiers in Afghanistan appears to have been similarly measured by a national heroic narrative: they were constantly compared with, and compared themselves against, their fathers who took part in the Great Patriotic War (World War Two). Years after operations in Afghanistan had concluded the *Afgantsy*, veterans of the conflict, fought hard to win recognition as 'internationalist-warriors', a category of veteran that held the greatest cachet in the minds of Russians, even after the fall of communism. That political change, to a rough form of democracy, emergent from the chaos of Russia's early transitional period, however transformative of other aspects of Russian life and the collective memory of communism, appears to have done little to change the mythologizing of conflicts prosecuted by young men under a variety of regimes. It would be unsurprising if Russian soldiers who took part in more recent military clashes, such as with Georgian troops in 2008, would have, in turn, looked to the legendary success of the *Agantsy* as a measure of their heroism. See Braithwaite's (2012) for many examples of the intergenerational comparisons made in wartime. Of course, the recent annexation of Crimea by the Russian military also provided many examples of regular and irregular martial forces framing their actions within the context of regaining national glory, even if, superficially, the action was justified on humanitarian grounds i.e. the protection of ethnic Russians.

each other in genealogically and generationally specific ways. This theme develops further when Pericles compares the education systems of Sparta and Athens, advocating the liberality of the Athenian system against the overly proscriptive, martial system of their opponents. A useful comparison of Euripides' Demophon with Thucydides' Pericles can thus be made in a number of ways. In one respect, Euripides encourages a sympathetic view of Demophon: in *Heraclidae* he is a ruler who must act in a purely pragmatic way when war comes unexpectedly to his community, just as Pericles must do at the onset of the Peloponnesian War (by allowing the lands of Attica to be ravaged by the Peloponnesians). Secondly, Demophon, chosen by the playwright to represent political power at Athens instead of the more heroic figure of Theseus, is held up as the embodiment of intergenerational decay: he is out-performed by an old man and he simply cannot live up to the heroic legacy of his father. And crucially, this choice of Demophon as king of Athens, as a lesser leader than Theseus, also results in the creation by Euripides' of *Heraclidae* as a fictive Athens on the eve of war without the strong, decisive and heroic leader, a scenario palpable at the historic Athens of the time of the play's production.[425]

During the Mytilenean Debate[426] the decision to carry out a highly contentious massacre was only narrowly avoided after a debate at Athens that shares the similar oscillations of opinion as Thucydides mentions at 2.65. But this is now post-Periclean Athens and the oscillations are more violent in their movement and consequences. The passage offers a picture of a rudderless city, the figure of Cleon as the best supported

[425] On all these points, it is a great pity that Aeschylus's version of *Heraclidae*, although known to have existed, has left barely a trace of textual record with which to compare.
[426] 3.36-50

political leader of the day[427] is greatly inferior to that of Pericles whose speech at 2.60-4 is presented by Thucydides as uncontested, that is, as persuasive and reflective of Pericles' stature as unchallenged pre-eminence. The lack of conviction on the part of Demophon, and the blood lust on the part of Alcmene that we witness towards the end of *Heraclidae*, perhaps reflect this state of political dissonance. Lines 471-3, in particular, must surely qualify as some of the weakest spoken by a political leader in tragedy when Demophon says: 'But if you know of some other plan which better meets the time's need, prepare it, as I am helpless after hearing the oracles and full of fear.' An explanation can be found, perhaps, in Demophon's very name, a compound of 'voice of the people'. His listless tackling of the problems he faces appear to be the mirror image of those in the real post-Periclean Athens at least as described by Thucydides: fearful and uncertain, ready to unquestioningly follow the advice of seers and prophets and completely devoid of any clear leadership.

Certainly, the theme of the role of prophecy in political decision-making is central to both *Heraclidae* and Thucydides. Thucydides paints a picture of the people of Athens wracked with indecision and uncertainty, fuelled in part and in part fuelling, a proliferation of 'professional prophets…with prophecies of all kinds'.[428] The famous passage, at 2.54, where Thucydides explains how the different interpretations of oracles depends on the context of the reading would be comic if it were not for the horrific effects of the plague that he describes.[429] And this tendency towards terrifying interpretation of oracles and prophecies is reflected in *Heraclidae* when Demophon

[427] 3.37-40
[428] 2.21
[429] See also 2.8 for the earthquake at Delos and its interpretation as a sign of impending war.

reveals that having, 'assembled all the chanters of oracles in one place…one judgement is conspicuous in them all: they order me to sacrifice to the daughter of Demeter.'[430] The point, that both Euripides and Thucydides appear to make, is that at times when a city is faced with decimation, whether this be from plague or an external threat, rationality itself is under threat too. The political turmoil in Athens is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than by Thucydides' assertion that Pericles subverted democratic decision-making 'fearing that any general discussion would result in wrong decisions, made under the influence of *orgē* (anger) rather than reason'.[431] Further still, Thucydides uses the term *homilos* to refer to the assembly and is clearly indignant with the skittishness of the beleaguered citizens and their inconsistency '…as is the way with crowds.'[432] Thucydides gives us an impression of a city rocked by events beyond its control, effecting oscillating sympathies and inconsistent lines of argument and decision-making. Regardless of Thucydides' tendency towards an encomium of Pericles, and possible anti-democratic sympathy, this is quite a claim and supports the view that normal political agencies and values are subject to massively counter-democratic forces at times of war. And yet the divergence here between *The History of the Peloponnesian War* and *Heraclidae* is extremely telling. The political acuity of Pericles' political perceptions means that he can control the people who feel helpless after hearing oracles and are fearful, unlike Demophon who experiences these emotions directly and embodies political paralysis.

[430] 400-8.
[431] 2.22.2 See chapter 4 '*Antigone*' for full discussion of the connection between youth, anger and faulty decision-making.
[432] 2.65. Thucydides uses '*homilos*' here, as in consistent with his use of language for those attending formal political sessions, unlike the use of '*ochlos*' for informal or lower ranking groups. See above, pp.35-6.

More historically than politically, Thucydides' recounting of the fate of the city of Plataea provides evidence for what would have been a striking contemporary example of fortune fluctuating between generations. The battle of Plataea, the last major land engagement between the Greek and the Persians, took place in 479 BCE, with the Plataeans playing a key part in the battle. Fifty years later and the city, allied to Athens and feeling betrayed following threats from Lacedaemonian allies at Thebes, came under siege from Sparta. This would have provided a fitting reminder to an audience of *Heraclidae* of the popular sentiment of degeneration from a glorious past and, in an ultimate rending of the heroic narrative from empirical reality, the city of Plataea was completely annihilated in 427.[433] To my mind, the historical parallels with action at Plataea offer significant reinforcement to a date range of 429-427. Vellacott[434] narrows the possible date down to 427/6 based purely on the historic parallels and makes the important observation that refugees from Plataea would have been present during these speculative production dates (although dating on this basis would allow production in 428 too). It is simply astonishing to think that refugees from Plataea could well have been in the audience, a possibility that adds immeasurable significance to Euripides' choice of mythic material. In a chapter on the use of irony by Euripides in *Heraclidae* that emphasises the generational context of Plataea, Vellacott compares the sacrifice of the character Macaria with the sacrifice of the city of Plataea 'both heroically offered in the cause of Athenian victory'.[435] While the argument suggests these are comparably heroic acts, it is likely that the effect, if intended, would be major depreciation of the Plataean war efforts, and unsuccessful as a piece of anti-

[433] 3.69.
[434] 1975, pp.178-204.
[435] p.186.

Spartan propaganda.[436] As such, it is a useful reminder of the dangers of drawing overly specific correspondences between the historic and literary. But it does remain the case that Plataea would have featured in the Athenian's minds, and that the generational context of the present military engagement would have been clear. It is odd, then, that Vellacott doesn't include in his review of irony in Euripides, one that includes this understanding of comparisons between generations, the positioning of youth and old age as counterpoints to highlight dissonances in normative views on the role of youth. Put differently, Vellacott sees the ironic in the positioning of themes, but fails to grasp that the paradoxical presentation of youth at the heart of the play is what sustains much of the ironic content.

Undoubtedly though, the staging of the play at Marathon carries an unambiguous link to the later stages of the last war with Persia, and the shifting loyalties between *poleis* such as Sparta, Athens, Thebes and Plataea.[437] On this reading, *Heraclidae* is a picture of Athens at the point of threat of a direct Spartan invasion of Athens, without a Pericles, and with clear reference to the importance of matching the successes of former generations, such as the victories of the Greeks at Plataea. There is still enough certainty in the greatness of Athens that victory is expected, but the consequences of defeat for the city and the values it upholds, or claims to, are potentially very grave

[436] Macaria would be a choice beyond ironic, being female, a relative of the progenitors of Sparta, the *Heraclidae*, and a self-selecting candidate for suicide. I feel none of these three qualities would have been acceptable as heroic comparisons for the people of Plataea.
[437] Further still, Allan correctly points out the relevance of the staging at Marathon, but also mentions Herodotus' reference to both Athens and Plataea based at the Sanctuary of Heracles before the battle (pp.47-8). In Herodotus, almost prefiguring the action of the Peloponnesian War, just before the battle of Marathon physical conflict breaks out between Thebes and Plataea, and diplomatic difficulties between Athens and Sparta (6.108). All these forces were at play during the proposed date range of *Heraclidae* and all can be considered to form part of historical or mythological narratives on generational flux and (usually) decay.

indeed. If Athens is to avoid the fate of Plataea it must take decisive action. The city might survive, but at what price?

In summary, these sections of Thucydides' work show how vulnerable a city's political values can be to being weakened or distorted at a time of political upheaval and how youth are considered naïve and yet essential to the war effort. The overall effect is an inherently conservative and atavistic underscoring of the importance of respecting what has gone before, in the glorified actions of the city's predecessors, and the reiteration of the debt each generation owes to the last. While being responsible for upholding the city's values in the face of crisis, youth are also accountable for the provision of further generations, who in turn will be asked to fight to defend their city and its ideology. The historical parallels serve to highlight the ever-present dangers of generational decay.

The role of the young men, then, is to grow up to fight, and possibly die, in battle to protect the city and, according to Pericles, to sustain the imperial interests of Athens (those interests that helped fund the enduring image of Athenian glory, such as the Parthenon). This rather depressing view of youth, albeit perhaps necessary in war when the existence of a city was at stake, is reflected back to Demophon in *Heraclidae* by the Herald who, in a lengthy opening speech to the king of Athens says:

> You will certainly get abuse from your citizens if you get into difficult waters for the sake of an ancient man, almost a tomb, a nothing, and these children. You will have at best only the hope of soon having the children as allies.[438]

These remarks could be seen to represent part of the view of youth as an Athenian might imagine would belong to a non-Athenian society. This is in sharp contrast to the more nuanced view of the role of young people in Sophocles' *Antigone* (see chapter 4), where age is considered alongside intellectual maturity, i.e. partly as a social measure, rather than purely biologically determined. But when considered alongside Thucydides' account of 431-426, these words suggest that youth were thought of primarily in terms of military utility at this time, that is in terms of young men's physical contribution to the city's survival. With Athens relatively secure, before any major, direct engagements with Sparta and with the empire still intact, the war had yet to focus the effects of political crisis on society itself. Athens was still unified and groups within the city, including those associated with a younger generation, had not fully factionalised, as would later be the case before the disaster of the Sicilian expedition some twenty years later. As such, while youth were not yet considered to represent an internal threat to the political hegemony held by older citizens, the general perception of Attic youth exhibiting natural recklessness would have no doubt been at the forefront of the minds of the *stratēgoi*. Demophon later refines the Herald's view of the relevance of each generation, saying: 'For the birth of noble offspring is terrifying to enemies, young men who remember the maltreatment of

[438] 165-8. The chorus then interject a typically Athenian utterance that a just decision cannot be taken until both sides of the argument are heard (180-1). See preceding chapter for discussion of 'deliberation'.

their father.'[439] Demophon presents in this speech the ideal form that inter-generational loyalty should take, and its effects.

The (superficially) gentle reminders that can be found throughout the play of how youth should behave in a city preparing for war take on a different tenor when considered in the wider inter-generational context. Demophon, on his entrance, at 120, says: 'Since you, old though you are, were quicker than younger men (*neōterous*) in running to a cry for aid…'. Although this line undoubtedly has a comic effect when addressed to the chorus of old men, the fact that they are old men of Marathon would no doubt set off comparisons in the minds of the audience between the heroism of the *Marathonomachoi* and the standard of young warriors of the day. This passage and others are effective because of the lack of young men in the play. Heracles' eldest son, Hyllus, is away scouting enemy positions and the youth of Athens, referred to, often indirectly, are absent from the stage.[440] Indeed, in a scene with a similar humour, Alcmene warns Hyllus' servant, before she knows who he is that: 'If you lay a hand on these children, you will have a shameful struggle with two old people.' [441] Just as in the scene of Demophon's entrance, the comic effect is enhanced by the latent observation that Alcmene and Iolaus are apparently vulnerable without the young of military age, in this case Hyllus, attendant to protect them. This is in contrast to many other tragedies where youth occupy principal roles. But, like the handling of other themes in the play such as the moral certainty of Iolaus' case, this scene sets up in the audience false expectations of frail, defenceless older characters reliant on younger men to

[439] 467-70. Compare Thu. 2.44, on the duty to produce more children to help assist the future security of the city.
[440] 120
[441] 652-3.

protect them (and it is the young men, referred to in special terms, who are specifically named as part of the Argive army and, it is implied, the Athenian army too).

Back to Thucydides. Most critically, Pericles' speech underscores the importance of children in providing for the future security of Athens,[442] an argument made explicit in Iolaus' speech as he recounts the family history of Demophon.[443] The famous announcement that children of those who died in battle will be supported financially by the city until their adulthood is as clear a sign as possible that some form of generational protection must be offered in order for young men to pass through military training and become ready to take up arms to defend the city.[444] Shortly after Iolaus' story of Demophon's genealogy, an angry exchange breaks out between the Herald, who attempts to take away the Heraclidae by force and Demophon who, against all conventions, threatens to strike him.[445] This scene sets the tone for much of the remainder of the play, as the very young and very old prepare for their possible annihilation at the hands of a foreign army. The following section, against this backdrop, is highly significant, and merits quoting at length:

> There is no finer gift for children than to be born of a noble and virtuous father….We, for example, had fallen into the utmost sufferings but found these friends and kinsmen, who, alone in the whole inhabited expanse of Greece,

[442] 2.44.
[443] 205-13
[444] 2.46.
[445] 250-87.

defended these children. Give them your right hands, children, give them, and you likewise to the children, and come close.[446]

The issue of greatest significance here is the emphasis on the importance of intergenerational continuity, specified by the reference to parentage and the physical gesture of linking the hands of the children and the old men of the chorus. In speech and action, the two generational boundary points form the impression of the life cycle in totality. But this impression is not as straightforward as it might seem. The old men of Athens are present, and the young children of Heracles, but the young men of fighting age are absent. It is these people whose lives are at the greatest risk from the Argive army and who have the greatest burden of responsibility. And, of course, the old men of Marathon, if considered to represent the heroes of past Athenian military victories, would have been responsible for some severely generationally limiting actions of their own. In short, the passage presents the inconsistency that is at the heart of *Heraclidae* and as a reflection of Athenian popular thought about youth and their role in war. Young men must aspire to match the achievements of their forebears by embarking on military action, and these endeavours are also thought by Athenian society as essential in helping to secure the future of the city. But those who shoulder this responsibility are to a great part removed from the decision-making that shapes their fate. Youth are essential yet politically powerless, expendable yet necessary for the furthering of the glory of the empire.

To an audience containing many young men, many facing war for the first time, this section of the play would probably have seemed quite galling. Those who would be

[446] 297-311

exempt from frontline duties, the old men of the chorus and Iolaus, talk on and on about their former glories and then claim that they alone should take credit for both the defence of the Heraclidae and the defence of Athens (and as much as Iolaus' rejuvenation later on is remarkable, it also means that the potential for the Athenian young men to win a famous victory against the Argive army has been denied them by an old man). The old men on the stage during this scene carve up the narrative between them, Demophon only reflecting the chorus' immediately preceding words at 333. The sense of a gerontocratic grip on the city's heroic narrative is reinforced further when, late in the play, Alcmene's call for the execution of Eurystheus is eventually agreed upon, contrary to the laws of Athens.

Read in this way, the play shows a subtle sophistication and ability to delivery irony by setting up heightened expectations of young men and then removing all possibility that these expectations can be met. This thematic handling results in the play's capacity to carry a subversive theme by stealth, delivered in a seemingly atavistic shell. In total, this approach reflects the dominant political mood of the day whilst also allowing some doubt to creep into the minds of the audience. Quite remarkably, the binary messages communicate how political absence can result in a more general absence from a social or historical or literary narrative, when all the while the felt presence of youth can never be completely removed. Whether physically, metaphorically or within the play's dramatic and historic context, youth are always lying in wait just off stage. In *Heraclidae*, history is written by the victors, and the victors are the old, Alcmene is seemingly in complete control of decision-making at Athens by the end of the play. But they cannot deny the importance of youth in

continuing the generational cycle or the attributes of youth in ensuring the continuing glory of a city or people.

The absence of young men in *Heraclidae* also offers a resonance of the massive mobilisation of those of relatively recent military age that must have taken place ahead of the first Spartan incursions into Attica. But the absence of youth in the play is problematic if taken as a direct historical parallel as, according to Thucydides, Pericles' advice was for the residents of Attica to withdraw from the countryside into Athens, a traditional tactic of the Athenians, and this would have resulted in the presence in Athens of a large number of young men ready to fight.[447] In this case, the absence of young men could be better understood as a proleptic suggestion of the death and battle to come, and a reminder of what was at stake. A more astonishing possibility is also imaginable, and that is the play was performed in front of an audience swollen in number by the young men who would have been drawn into Athens from the countryside ravaged by the Peloponnesians. The real and dramatic off-stage presence of large numbers of men in their youthful prime would have been a remarkable act of staging.

Thucydides suggests that a large garrison consisting of the youngest and the oldest in the army was responsible for the final defence of the city and this likely mobilisation of inferior troops does make the following passage regarding Iolaus' desire to fight take

[447] 2.13-5. See 2.8 for the willingness of young men to fight. Thucydides' states that around 16,000 were garrisoned for the defence of Athens, a number drawn from the oldest and youngest from the army, and from *metics* who qualified as hoplites (2.13). Allan (2001, p.154) points out the historic parallel between Athens at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War and the lines at 280-1 when the Herald uses the threat of destruction of the Athenians' crops.

on a highly historically-relevant appearance. In Athens, old men would be expected to rally to the defence of the city walls and it is likely that this duty would have been communicated as an appeal to the memory of former glory. As conscription at Athens continued up to the age of 59, it is just about possible that this veteran garrison would include some men in their late sixties and early seventies who would have seen action at the battle of Plataea in 479.[448] There would certainly have been some veterans of Plataea alive in the audience. Reflected and dressed up in a comic idiom, it is possible to read the protracted interaction between Iolaus and Hyllus' servant (680-747) as offering an ironic parallel to the demands about to be placed on old men in a real war.[449]

During this exchange, the chorus warn that youth, *hēbēn,* cannot be regained, 'there is no way for you to get your youth back again'.[450] The use of *hēbēn* here is significant.

[448] For the age range for hoplites, see Christ (2001, p.404). By modern standards, this inclusion of old men seems extreme, but as recently as World War Two, old and young men would have fought in defence of their besieged city, such as was the case at Berlin in 1945. Christ suggests that those over 50 were most likely exempt from overseas operations but with the latter stages of the war with Persia on Athens' doorstep, it is quite possible that the upper age range of soldiers would have been included in the ranks. Herodotus suggests that 8,000 hoplites (9.28-9) from Athens took part at the battle of Plataea, with many more light infantry and auxiliaries. If Herodotus' estimate of a citizen body of 30,000 is correct (5.97), the vast majority of Athenian hoplites would have been at Plataea.

[449] Allan (pp.183-5) discusses the differing scholarly opinions on whether this scene is humorous, as well as whether there are any comic elements in the play and how this effects the subsequent reception of *Heraclidae*. To me, it is impossible to read this in any way other than comic, particularly when comic speech is made about the physicality of old men elsewhere (120). Of course, this use of comedy, consistent with other scenes in the play, has made the work's classification as tragedy problematic to some, but the use of comedy, such as in Euripides' *Helen*, is not unknown. Indeed, there is no reason to think that comedy should not be found in tragic plays, even in the genre's darkest moments (see chapter 8 on Euripides' *Bacchae*). Bernard Knox (1986, pp.251-74) explains well that the persistent barrier to labelling plays such as *Ion* as comedy, and for identification of comic elements in other tragedies, is due in large part to the rigid definition of comedy as exclusively Aristophanic. By Knox's account, if Euripides' *Electra* can be considered to contain comic scenes, all the better to juxtapose with later horrifically tragic scenes, so can *Heraclidae*.

[450] 707-8.

The first time this term is used in relation to youth in the play is when the Argive Herald threatens Athens with, 'a large army of young men (*hēbēn*) in Argos'.[451] As appears time and again in *Heraclidae*, the army is composed of, and known primarily as, a force of young men. The significance of the use of the stem *hēbē* over more common terms, such as *neos,* is twofold: firstly it relates semantically to the goddess Hebe, personification of youth and mythological wife of Heracles, a figure who was closely associated with the martial values of youthful physicality, and thus places Ioalaus' actions within a heroic context.[452] At line 740-1, Iolaus uses the semantically proximate *hēbēsanta* when he says: 'Ah!, I wish, arm of mine, you could be such an ally to me as I remember you were in your youth *[hēbēsanta]*, when you destroyed Sparta with Heracles!'

And secondly, the term has been known in relation to social transformation, such as the ritual known a little later as the *ephēbia*, when the upper limit of adolescence is reached and the transition to adulthood, through martial training, begins. In this respect, the term relates closely to an associative field that contains military and social

[451] 283. The term is actually quite uncommon in tragedy. There are limited uses applied some plays, such as *Persae* (512, 733) *Helen* (12) and *Medea* (1108) but they are far outstripped by terms such as *neos* and various derivatives that appear throughout tragedy, including *Heraclidae* (cf. 120, 469 and see entries on *Prometheus* and *Antigone*). The term's associative field, containing both the paramilitary initiation to adulthood and mythological character who embodied youth, must be considered of acute significance. In *Persae*, the term is used only when referring to the ranks of the dead young men of the Persians, but in *Helen* and *Medea* it is used in relation to young women about to pass in the adulthood. When *hēbēs* is used at line 11 in *Seven against Thebes*, it is specifically in relation to the defence of the city against an invading force of Argives. See McCullogh & Cameron (1980, pp.1-14)

[452] Laurens, A.F (1988, pp.458–464). With reference to martial training see p.461. Hebe also appears as cup-bearer in the presence of Ares, in full combat gear, in a vase painting from the early fifth century, LIMC IV, Vol. II, 1990, p.276, Hebe I.34, London, British Museum, E.67, plot. Mus. C1 337. Hebe, is widely referenced in ancient textual sources, albeit with conflicting accounts of her place in the Olympic genealogy (Pindar, *Nemean Ode* 7.1, 8.1; *Homeric Hymn 3 to Pythian Apollo 196*; Hesiod, *Theogony* 17, 950. In *Theogony,* line 922 is especially interesting, placing Hebe as siblings of Ares (god of War) and Eileithyia (goddess of Childbirth), suggestive of a recognisable cohort of divinities associated with generational change and war.

transformative properties. Admittedly, much of the scant evidence for the *ephēbia* belongs to the following century but it appears likely that some sort of ritual of entering manhood and military training would have been understood in the fifth century.[453] The use of the term, then, is a sign that a threshold is about to be passed, albeit in a reversal, from physical immaturity (or in Iolaus' case, infirmity) to martial competence. In this passage, with the Argive army massing, the term is used against a threatening backdrop, and deploying a word that relates to the stage of transition into adulthood adds impact when used in a context of violence where that transition for the young of the city is under threat. Thus, when the herald threatens to unleash his army of *hēbē* he is warning that the young of Athens are threatened with a sudden unavailability of the transition of the *ephēbia*, i.e. death.

To reiterate, the impact of this apparently systematic use of the term is to frame young men's role and status within the heroic framework of martial values and mythological characters that embodies these values (Hebe and Heracles), whilst highlighting the instability and vulnerability of youth. This use by Euripides may have reflected the historical context of the opening salvos of the Peloponnesian War during which there would have been open exhortations or rallying calls to the defence of Athens by young men (and old men) at a time of great threat to the city. Unlike in *Antigone*, these young men are not given a voice and perhaps this is because of the narrow set of expectations placed upon them in wartime. Whereas in *Antigone,* Haemon's character is defined by his engagement with debate and willingness to participate in the politics of the city (as a reflection of the softening of traditional anxiety about the recklessness

[453] Vidal Naquet (1986) *The Black Hunter.* See also Wilkins (1990, pp.329-339) who argues for Heracles' close connection with the *ephebia*.

of youth in a period of unparalleled stability and confidence), the muteness of youth in *Heraclidae* reflects the new prevalent mood: young men of military age were expected to fight and not to question why. After all, they were unable to fully participate in the politics of Athens and excluded from the *Boulē.* They represented a large, militarily important cohort with direct representation solely in the *Ekklesia*, without any executive influence, due to age restrictions, or participation as councillors, as jurors or magistrates.[454] As we shall see in later chapters, the arc of portrayals of youth in tragedy (from negative to positive and back to negative again) reaches its nadir in *Orestes* and *Bacchae*, in which youth are presented at their most negative, and this negative presentation is given the greatest prominence in tragedy, when Athens was in the midst of tumultuous revolutions and counter-revolutions.

Discussion now turns to the incredible scene of the rejuvenation of Iolaus, at 799-866, perhaps the most memorable passage of the play. Almost any commentary on the play makes reference to the cult of Iolaus and how both the hero and his worship were associated with youth. I hope to establish clarity of understanding of this aspect of the character of Iolaus in order to fully appreciate what associations the play's audience

[454] Even in the *Ekklesia*, older citizens had once been given priority to speak (Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*, 23; *Against Ctesiphon*, 2-4). The minimum age for most offices, outside membership of the *Ekklesia*, appears to have been 30 (Hansen, 1999, pp.88-90). For the *Areopagus*, the minimum was 31, '…and with a median age of about 55; and the arbitrators for private suits were chosen from citizens in their last year of liability for conscription, when they were fifty-nine.' (p.89) This apparent gerontocratic tendency is comparable to that reflected in the average age of current British legislative and judiciary members: the average age of Members of Parliament is 50, of Members of the House of Lords is 69, and of magistrates it is 57. http://www.ucl.ac.uk/spp/publications/unit-publications/45.pdf ; http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100408/text/100408w0001.htm Even if the *Ekklesia* admitted citizens from the age of 18, it would seem likely that, as now, active politicians, roughly corresponding to the small group who would frequently put forward proposals or make speeches, would be significantly older, whether by protocol or as a consequence of the experience older citizens could gain by membership of other offices.

would have made when witnessing the famous messenger scene. As the cult of Iolaus appears to have a well attested association with youth, a brief excursus on cult activity related to youth and Iolaus follows. Necessarily, this discussion includes relationships between cult activity and the historical context, in order to be consistent with the general approach of relating the play to a demonstrably real set of social concerns.

There is a complex intertextual tangle of references to youth and Iolaus in the ancient sources, pre- and post-dating the most likely date of the production of *Heraclidae*, making any modern interpretation of the passage of Iolaus' rejuvenation vulnerable to influence by knowledge of later sources.[455] It is easy to see Euripides' handling of Iolaus as simply reflecting a well-established tradition of presentations of Iolaus as associated with youth. But the later dates of various attestations of Iolaus' youth cult, and Pindar's placing of Iolaus at Thebes rather than Marathon/Athens, make it possible that Euripides' presentation is an innovation, partly fuelled by the play's historical context in which the old and the young were the last line of defence of the Athenians.

The sole surviving evidence for the cult of Iolaus, which we know existed at the time of the production of Euripides' *Heraclidae,* is to be found in Pindar. The confusing mass of all other competing mythological stories about the hero are attested in the conflicting later sources. As such, it is almost impossible to disentangle the various myths and

[455] Wilkins (1990, p.334), in an otherwise useful summary of youth and cult in *Heraclidae* fails to avoid the retrojection of Pausanias, for example, into the mythological record of Iolaus: 'The interesting group of Hebe, Iolaos and Alkmene. Whether or not this quartet was recognised in the fifth century is impossible to say but the association is significant'.

retold and modified stories about Iolaus. All that can be confidently claimed is that there were strong associations of Iolaus with Thebes, unsurprising given the city's association with Heracles, and that Iolaus/Heracles appears to be closely connected with young men, at least in the martial values that they both embody. That Heracles was married to Hebe, the personification of youth, in his personal mythology, further intensifies the connection between Iolaus/Heracles and youth and this rings out with absolute clarity in the scene of Iolaus' rejuvenation.[456]

Some local appropriation by an Athenian audience of Iolaus' miraculous transformation can be interpreted through Iolaus' joining of the Athenian army, but it is Hyllus' servant (presumably, both as a slave and as owned by a non-Athenian, ethnically not Athenian himself) who leads the old man into battle. So, then, the Athenian role in the relationship appears to act primarily as democratic host to a persecuted hero and his charges, rather than as playing a part in the aetiology of the cult of Iolaus. This presentation is consistent with the historical parallels that have been drawn above. The greater and more heroic the figure, and his associated history, that seeks refuge at Athens, the greater the reflected glory on the host city. The individual Iolaus and collective Plataea both represent the greatest of former martial glories: Iolaus suffers from the vulnerability of old age and the absence of Heracles as

[456]The iconographic record of Iolaus, which is massive due to his association with Heracles, is too extensive to survey here. There is a huge increase in the popularity of Iolaus on vase painting in the sixth century, when the popularity of Heracles peaked, but he is much less frequently found in the fifth and fourth centuries (LIMC V, vol. I, p.695). From a modern perspective, parallels can be made between the apparent dwindling in popularity of representations of Iolaus through the centuries, before a brief and dazzling return in Euripides' *Heraclidae*, and the dwindling power of the character in the play itself, before a brief and dazzling return to power in the rejuvenation scene. As a parable for the journey through life stages, the jarring reintroduction of the character's previous prowess underscores the relentlessness of time's impact on the individual for all but the gods.

his powerful ally, Plataea, once symbol of unity of force, is unable to adequately defend itself without the support of imperial Athens. The destruction of Plataea threatened to physically erase the site of the defeat of the Persians whilst the threat of death of Heracles' children would erase the lineage, and so continued glory, of Heracles' feats. But as is the case throughout the play, this simple formulation comes with an ironic undertone. As we shall see shortly, a sudden revelation at the end of the play creates a dramatic inversion in the moral narrative.

At this point my discussion returns to the text and the evidence for Iolaus' association with Hebe and youth, and how this association relates to earlier discussion in this chapter on the importance of terms within the semantic range of the noun *Hēbē*, rather than the adjective *neos*. In the messenger speech, in which Iolaus' rejuvenation is reported,[457] the connections between Hebe and Heracles, youth and martial values unite around the story of Iolaus becoming a young warrior again. The full speech is précised by the messenger's startling report to Alcmene that: 'he [Iolaus] has changed back from an old to a young man again'.[458] In this section, unlike the descriptions of the young soldiers of the Argive army, or Iolaus' recollections of his past, the term used to mark Iolaus' miraculous transformation is '*neos*', as if to make clear that whatever he has temporarily become, he cannot truly re-become an *ephēbe*, due to the transitional nature of this category as from adolescence to manhood.

[457] 799-865
[458] 796.

The messenger continues to report the formation of battle lines and Hyllus' challenge of Eurystheus to single combat, sacrifice and preparation for battle before a brief description of the battle itself and the beginning of the rout of the Argive army.[459] At this point the messenger tells of Iolaus' boarding of Hyllus' chariot and his prayer to Hebe and Zeus, asking that 'he become young [*neos*] for a single day'.[460] But it appears that it is Hebe and Heracles, not Zeus, who apply the divine transformation:

> For two stars stood above the horses' yoke and hid the chariot in a shadowy cloud. Those more skilled about such things say that it was your son and Hebe. And out of the murky darkness Iolaus showed the youthful mould of his young arms.[461]

The terminology used is again telling. Iolaus is described as possessing a youthful mould, '*neōn brachionōn',* that is, he appears a young man. But his 'young arms', *'hebē tēn typon'* reflects the language used to describe young men entering military age.[462] If he is a young man by miraculous appearance only, his actions are primed to be consistent with the martial values expected of young men in military training at the time of war. Consequently, the Messenger goes on to report, 'Glorious Iolaus captured Eurystheus' four-horse chariot at the Scironian rocks, and having bound his hands with cords he comes leading the formerly blessed general…'.[463] The physical act that captures Eurystheus could only be carried out by *hebētēn typon* of military prime, even

[459] 799-842.
[460] 851-2.
[461] 855-6.
[462] Taking this passage in full, the apparently self-conscious and self-referential language here could well have been used by Euripides to draw attention specifically to the taking on of different characters by the actor playing Iolaus, that is, as a young man or an old one. If so, it would heighten the sense of a play with a superficial message masking its true dramatic face. See Hall (2006, pp.99-141) for the use of masks in tragedy, but also her warning against imprecise identification of meta-theatre in a dramatic form that does not include overt self-referentiality, p.108, n.36.
[463] 859-63.

if divinely gifted. His appearance as a young man (*neos*) is superficial, his actions as a temporary member of the *hēbēn,* substantive. But this transformation is illusory in another respect. Although Iolaus, through the agency of the gods of youth in Hebe and Heracles, has won the war, he has unwittingly set himself up to lose the battle for a secure future for the Heraclidae, as Eurystheus is about to reveal.

Alcmene is unsurprisingly ecstatic at the news of Iolaus' defeat of Eurystheus and the capture of her former tormentor, proclaiming: 'O Zeus, you finally regarded my sufferings'.[464] In a section of speech that neatly captures the rewards that await the younger generation if they can match the glories in battle of their predecessors (in this case, only available through the proxy of the old/young Iolaus), Alceme foresees: 'Children, now, yes, now you will be free of your troubles, free of the accursed Eurystheus! And you will see your father's city, take possession of his landed estates and sacrifice to your ancestral gods.' [465] These joyful predictions are quickly curtailed by a rising fury as Alcmene questions why Iolaus has not put Eurystheus to death. Perhaps sensing that he has acted rashly, becoming as a youth in his thinking as well as in his renewed physical prowess, Alcmene says, 'But with what clever motive did Iolaus spare Eurystheus from death?... For in my judgement this is no clever thing.'[466] It could be the case that Iolaus is simply more cautious than Alcmene, and does not suffer from the direct generational threat of losing his grandchildren that Alcmene does, but he is clearly as disgusted by Eurystheus' actions as Heracles' mother. Both characters use

[464] 869.
[465] 871-6.
[466] 880-2.

the same language when referring to the Argives as '*ho misos',* or hateful thing.[467] But, Alcmene's bloodthirsty wish that Eurystheus, '…must die vilely…you should be dying more than once',[468] is also consistent with the general theme of justice dispensed by the old, regardless of whether their justice is at odds with the laws of the city. And this judgement and justice, i.e. the political power, is prosecuted by those who have not been put directly at risk through military action, a reiteration of the generationally weighted balance of political power and exposure to danger. When Eurystheus replies to Alcmene, he restates a peculiar prophecy, so far unarticulated in the play: '…I shall lie forever beneath the earth, a foreign resident who is well disposed to you and a saviour to the city, but most hostile to the descendant of these children when they betray this favour of yours and come here with a powerful army'.[469] It is not an overestimate to say that this sudden revelation changes everything. For an Athenian audience, feelings of moral clarity and loyalty to Iolaus can no longer be easily sustained. Undoubtedly, the audience would cast their minds towards their current array of allies, and what hidden future they might bring about for the real world Athens. But it is only really at this point when the *Heraclidae*/Sparta myth emerges in the play. At the point when a simple and heroic resolution to the plot seems imminent, the theme of shifting allegiances and the suggestion of generational decay (at least from an Athenian perspective) is strongly reasserted.

[467] Alcmene at 941; Iolaus at 52.
[468] 957-60.
[469] 1032-5.

The play then ends abruptly, with the chorus convinced of the need to execute Eurystheus, saying to Alcmene: 'This [judgment of death] seems right to me'.[470] Yet one wonders how much the news of the prophecy has swayed their reaction. The figure of Demophon is nowhere to be seen and apparently has no involvement in this major decision. Indeed, Demophon has been absent from both the action and speeches of the play from around line 600, playing no part in the major political decisions or in the military clash with the Argive army. As is the case earlier in the play when Iolaus and the chorus decide between them which course to take, the chorus and elderly Alcmene plot the political direction of Athens. The old appear to have total political control, having temporarily appropriated the image and physical attributes of youth.

For all these points, *Heraclidae* is still considered a minor star in the Euripidean firmament. It is true that the play does lack a real tragic core as the sacrifice of Macaria and the late narrative twist of Eurystheus' ironic legacy in death are not developed enough to have much dramatic or emotional impact. The play's comic content, however effective in creating thematic juxtapositions, also contributes to a tempering of the play's tragic intensity. Perhaps these perceptible weaknesses are due to the play's very particular historical context, and because the production was so fundamentally tied to the political climate. This should not be surprising, given that the possible date range of first performance would make this play a strong contender for the first of the Peloponnesian War period, a conflict that Thucydides describes as more

[470] 1053.

significant than any other conflict in the history of Greek civilisation.[471] If considered on these terms, *Heraclidae* is an extremely important testament to the dynamic relationship between tragedy and empirical reality in classical Athens, and a significant record of the pressures on a society that was acutely aware of the possibility that not just its current imperial interest, but also its glorious past were under threat. Simultaneously, the city would rely on the next generation to put themselves at risk to secure both the past and future, and in such large numbers that even if successful, there would be serious generational imbalances to come. Indeed, the end of the play is quite shocking in this respect. There are none but the old on stage, Alcmene, the chorus and possibly Iolaus, and their decision-making is highly questionable, and in the case of Alcmene ultimately self-defeating. No mention is made of the sacrifices of Athenian youth who were committed to battle, unnecessarily it seems, without a clear mandate, to borrow a loaded modern phrase. And even if youth had played an important role the glory is claimed by the old as a reflection of Iolaus' former heroic *aretē*. The message from the play's gerontocratic cast could not be clearer: youth's role is to fight and die without question. The skill of Euripides, and a reason why *Heraclidae* should be re-evaluated as a first-rate play, is this: it presents a dramatic superstructure that appears to revel in a utilitarian view of youth at war, progressively iterated through the continual measurement of current actions to past achievements, whilst simultaneously questioning the base relations between young and old in society by setting up standards it will be impossible for youth to meet. All the while, throughout the performance, an audience of young men preparing to go to war for the first time in their lives would have been looking on. One can only imagine they did so with a dawning realisation of their new grim reality.

[471] Thu. 1.1.

Chapter 6

Sophocles' *Philoctetes*:

Youth and limitations on personal authority

So far, this investigation of the role of youth in tragedy has focussed on presentations of popular conceptions of the psychology of young people. In *Antigone*, for example, the inverted use of such concepts, like that of the reckless youth who is unable to control his emotions, is part of an overall narrative structure about political decision-making. Critical views of youth have been discussed largely in relation to such commonplace and negative conceptions, but it is important to remember that young male citizens of Athens *did* have involvement in the city's political processes, however limited. In Sophocles' *Philoctetes* the central character, Neoptolemus, is a young man with a heavy responsibility, one that, if fulfilled, will ensure a Greek victory at Troy. The ways in which this responsibility is determined, relieved or complicated by older men in the play offers the opportunity to uncover perspectives on the actual level of political or personal authority that a young man might be allowed. The date of the play's production, at 409, was a critical point in Athenian history, both generally and specifically in relation to the political involvement of young men. This political backdrop, I will argue, allows the presentation of personal authority in the play to relate to popular discussion in contemporary Athens on how young men should be managed within the city's political framework.

A decade after the call to arms of Euripides' *Heraclidae*, a series of tumultuous military and political events had left Athens stunned. The catastrophe of the total and

unequivocal defeat of the Athenian expeditionary force at Syracuse in 413 sparked a backlash against what might have remained of the younger political faction at Athens. Blamed for the decision to sail against Sicily, and castigated as reckless, younger male citizens were denied access to positions of greater political power when a *Proboulē* of only older men was appointed to oversee decision-making.[472] This conservative administration was not to last and was replaced by a far more retrograde regime when the oligarchic coup of 411 asserted the political dominance of a group of four hundred of the wealthiest citizens of Athens. The coup, according to Thucydides, was partly facilitated by a group of younger men who met in the 'political clubs' (*hetairiai*), apparently constituted by groups of wealthy citizens with oligarchic tendencies (see the similar account of the drinking clubs that lead to the mutilation of the Hermae).[473] These young men assassinated the democratic leader, Androcles, whilst at the same time the leaders of the oligarchic party took to taking an escort of 'Hellenic Youth' with them in order to intimidate political opponents into silence.[474] In Thucydides' account, democracy was restored, ironically due to the efforts of Alcibiades, once a frequenter of the *hetairiai.* The remainder of his account, ending abruptly in 411, speaks no more of youth in Athens.

[472] Thu.8.1.

[473] 8.65. Hall (1993, pp.263-85, esp. pp.269-70) discusses the *hetairiai* in relation to the group dynamic between Electra, Orestes and Pylades in Euripides' *Orestes* and points out how these 'clubs' appear to have been tiered by age groups and placed the greatest value on companionship over familial bonds. The following chapter will discuss *Orestes* in detail, including the gang-like presentation of young people. Focus will be on the significance of age in the *hetairiai,* rather than their general existence. This is because the democratic system demonstrably evolved to become the political expression of none blood groups to mitigate the invidious influence of dynastic families at Athens before the reforms of Cleisthenes at the end of the sixth century.

[474] 8.69 The term, Hellenic Youth, '*hellenes neaniskoi',* is odd. See n.212

It was just two years later that Sophocles' *Philoctetes* was performed, winning first place in the City Dionysia, according to the transmitted text's hypothesis. The play is dominated by the relationship between the young Neoptolemus and two older characters, Odysseus and Philoctetes, and is the only tragedy extant in complete form to feature Neoptolemus as an on-stage character.[475] The innovation by Sophocles of giving equal, if not greater, prominence to Neoptolemus over Philoctetes in his version of the story of Philoctetes' retrieval is highly significant.[476] It changes the myth of Philoctetes' abandonment and recovery from simply a story of the utility of Odysseus' *dolos* in enabling the fall of Troy to a play about education and guardianship and the

[475] He does appear in reported speech in *Andromache* and overshadows all of the play's action *in absentia*. Indeed, as a character returning from the Trojan Wars with an enslaved Trojan princess and finally killed due to atrocities committed at Troy, Neoptolemus, in this play, is a figure comparable to Agamemnon in Aeschylus' play. He is also referred to in Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Troades,* but only in passing, which is perhaps surprising given the character's pivotal role in the mythology of the capture of Troy. However, all these plays are much earlier than *Philoctetes* and emerged from a historical period quite different from that of Sophocles' play, each predating the catastrophe of Syracuse of 413, the oligarchic revolution of 411 and the restoration of democracy in 410. Many fragments of tragedies attributable to Sophocles have survived since the fifth century. From them we can see that the playwright had made use of stories associated with Neoptolemus, such as *Hermione* and *Euryalus*; there are four fragments of a *Philoctetes at Troy*. Others contain interesting lines on age; fragment 487 of *Peleus* has an unnamed character proclaim: 'for as a man grows old he becomes a child once again', while *Men of Scyros* includes: 'For war likes to hunt down men who are young (*andras…neous*, fragment 554) and Neoptolemus is mentioned as a character is fragment 557. Both these plays may have prominently featured Neoptolemus (Lloyd-Jones, 2003, pp.252-3 and 276-7). In *The Women of Phthia,* fragment 694, a character says, 'You are young; you have much to learn and much to listen to, and need long schooling.' Here it is very tempting to speculate that this may have been spoken to Neoptolemus, as has been suggested by others (p.331). An optimistic review of these fragments would suggest that Sophocles has a particular interest in the character. However, it must be remembered that Sophocles was prolific, the *Suda* stating he authored 123 tragedies, and that constructing possible plotlines, let alone thematic structures, from fragments is extremely problematic. What can be said of *Philoctetes* is that no other tragedy by Sophocles, complete or in fragments, so clearly put the young man Neoptolemus as the central figure. He constitutes a vortex around which all discussion flows.

[476] *Discourse* 52 of Dio Chrysostom provides a comparison between Sophocles' play, the much earlier version by Aeschylus and Euripides' *Philoctetes*, performed some decades before the 409 production. From Dio Chrysostom, and what fragments survive, neither of other tragedian's versions appears to feature youth as a theme, or even younger men as main characters. While Neoptolemus does have a strong connection with Philoctetes in the various fragments of books in the 'Epic Cycle', Sophocles is the first to send Achilles' son to Lemnos. See Mandel (1981) for a comprehensive record of Philoctetes in ancient textual and iconographic sources.

nature of '*kalos kagathos'* aspects of noble descent. This significance is also historical: the actions of young men had been critical in shaping recent Athenian history, the influence of sophistic education was at a peak, and traumatic political abrasions, caused by the friction between factions representing democratic, consensual and communal action as opposed to hereditary, noble and oligarchic ones, had led to revolution and counter-revolution. These factors have not escaped scholarly attention and Sophocles' *Philoctetes* has a substantial bibliography.[477] The relationship between Odysseus and Neoptolemus has been much discussed in relation to a perceived father-son dynamic and the nature of competing education systems and the values they represent.[478] But less often discussed is what the two men have in common, and that is a desire to control Neoptolemus' actions. Rather than re-tread old scholarly ground on the relative merits of different moral codes, my analysis will focus on how all the older characters of the play, and they all are older than Neoptolemus, challenge his capacity for self-determination.[479]

[477] A useful bibliography can be found in Ussher (1990, pp.v-xviii). There are a number of sources of particular note in relation to the investigation of the control of young men, as an ambiguous reflection in the play of factors in society: an incorporated sophistic analysis of society and interrogation of Odysseus as Sophist in *Philoctetes* (Rose, 1976); for visual aspects of the play, such as the significance of the young physically supporting the old and the play's numerous delayed exits, which I believe could be considered as mapping the frustration of adolescence (Taplin, 1971); on Homeric resonances (Knox, 1964); and the ethical dimensions of character relations (Blundell, 1991).

[478] For the clear father and son dimension, see Whitby (1996). Rose (1992, pp.266-330) argues convincingly that the play's thematic content reflects contemporary friction in Athens between those who would give primacy to education or inherited excellence in shaping the best kind of citizen, and how these competing systems are encoded with political theory supporting oligarchic versus democratic positions. I follow his warning not to attempt to draw direct parallels between the characters in *Philoctetes* and those in historical Athens, nor to suggest that Sophocles favoured one of the political factions, but to see the play as an ambiguous product of the political morass of late fifth-century Athens (pp.327-30).

[479] Without risking an attempt at drawing an overly reductivist parallel, Sophocles' appointment as one of the *Probouloi* immediately before the oligarchic revolution of 411, at great old age, is significant in that the playwright would have experienced first-hand the acutely political consequences of the competition between different value systems to the polis, those of the democrats and those of the oligarchs. See Osborne (2012, pp.270-86).

First, though, a short excursus is required in order to highlight the difficulties in assessing the presence of contemporary social themes in post-Thucydidean tragedy. For 409 onwards, there are five major sources that might be harvested for social and political views in Athens. These are: Xenophon's *Hellenica*, the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* of unknown authorship, Diodorus of Sicily's *Biblioteca Historica,* the *Athenaion Politeia* attributed to Aristotle*,* and finally a number of texts that survive from ancient forensic orators, namely Antiphon, Andocides and Lysias.[480] Xenophon's account of the period, beginning where Thucydides' account ended in 411, is deficient on a number of counts. It contains practically no commentary on social factors affecting Athens, and very little of the political, other than to account for a degree of disunity. Second, it appears to focalise the Spartan perspective, which diminishes its utility as evidence for Athenian anxieties during this period. Xenophon, who had been implicated in the conservative backlash against the democracy and had been associated with the increasingly unpopular Socrates, had vested interests in his presentation of this earlier period in his life. But most critically, it is likely to have been composed many years after events, unlike the relatively contemporary account by Thucydides. This lack of contemporaneity is a problem particular to all historical sources covering the period.

Although the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* is an important historical corrective to Xenophon, and outlines tensions between the Athenian population and variously appointed

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Aristophanes mercilessly mocks the *Probouloi* in *Lysistrata* (387-461), perhaps a reflection of the membership's inefficacy.

[480] These oratorical sources survive from the fifth century and are easily overshadowed by the vast oratorical literature that exists from the fourth century. While these later sources undoubtedly contain much that is relevant to discussion of views on youth, where there is sufficient material I restrict discussion to contemporary sources or those historical works that relate specifically to the historical period in question.

stratēgoi,[481] it too was probably composed up to half a century after the latter years of the Peloponnesian War.[482] Likewise, the *Bibliotheca historica* of Diodorus of Sicily offers an interesting view of the Athenian mindset at 410-9,[483] yet the work dates from centuries later (not to mention that Diodorus most likely drew his evidence for this period from the author of the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*).

Although not strictly a historical text, the Aristotelian *Athenaion Politeia,* from the second half of the fourth century, provides discussion on the changing form of government at Athens during the last decades of the fifth century. Amongst the wealth of technical information, 'Aristotle' includes important details on age requirements during the rule of the 5,000 in 411, including the minimum age of 30 for participation in the *Boulē*[484] and 40 in the higher administrative roles within the oligarchy.[485] However, 'Aristotle' completely skips discussion of the period around the restoration of democracy in 410 and so does not state whether the political change resulted in any recalibration of political-office age restrictions, reflecting the change of political system.

It must first be stated that all forensic oratory is by definition highly selective in deployment of 'facts' and designed to persuade the reader/auditor to accept a single point of view. As such, such speeches can in no way be considered objective. And just as critically, of the three Attic orators in question, Andocides, Lysias and Antiphon, the two native Athenians (Andocides and Antiphon) appear to have significant oligarchic

[481] Florence Fragment, 1.2.
[482] McKechnie & Kern (1988, pp.7-16).
[483]With confidence restored after an important naval victory at Cyzicus, Athens felt secure enough to turn down a peace offer by Sparta (*Bib. His*. 13.52).
[484] 30.1.
[485] 29.3.

sympathies, indeed Antiphon could be considered an extremist for the central role he played in the establishment of oligarchic rule of 411.[486] However, detailed source criticism of early Attic oratory is outside the scope of this work and discussion will proceed with focus on evidence for the political state of affairs at Athens around the time of the production of *Philoctetes.*

Andocides' *On His Return* is likely to have been fashioned shortly after the restoration of Athenian democracy of 410 and so corresponds well with the short-lived period of renewed political stability in Athens before the final defeat to Sparta in 404 BCE. In this speech, Andocides attempts to barter a revocation of his earlier exile with the offer of corn, in order to alleviate diminishing supplies following intense military clashes affecting the trade route via the Bosphorus.[487]

The speech is clearly pitched to an audience with democratic sympathies and consistently makes reference to his dedication to the public good;[488] yet his words reveal a basic distrust of the *Ekklesia*.[489] Indeed, Andocides goes so far as to ask the *Ekklesia* to revoke his exile before the full extent of his offer is revealed to those outside the *Boulē*,[490] only stating that fourteen ships laden with grain are about to dock in Piraeus. As we shall see, there are some striking similarities to the patrician attitude of Odysseus to Neoptolemus, in which the older man rations out information

[486] Maidment, 1982, pp.2-6.
[487] Andocides, it should be noted, was exiled for his role in the mutilation of the *Hermae* in 415, an act he suggests was due to his youthful folly (2.7).
[488] 2.18.
[489] 2.19-20.
[490] 2.21-22.

to the younger. At its core, this speech demonstrates the potential fractures between the petitioning individual, the general population and the decision-making executive, potentially all with differing views on the correct policy to adopt. It is of little surprise that Andocides' haughty appeal was unsuccessful, but the fact that a single citizen felt confident enough to taunt the *Ekklesia* when asserting his perceived rights is instructive.

In Lysias' *For Polystratus*, the famous orator wrote the speech for delivery by the accuseds' son in defence of charges of actions against democracy. As was the case in *on his Return*, the speech dates from the period shortly after the restoration of democracy and focusses on contributions to the public good by the defendant. Interestingly, the defence quickly makes use of Polystratus' age, arguing that as an older man he was naturally inclined towards moderating the excesses of others rather than bold opportunism.[491] However, unlike Andocides, the speech gives the impression of a lack of personal agency, of an old man caught up in the oligarchic revolution in which he played no causative role, effectively casting Polystratus as a victim of wider political forces. The fact that the defendant's son delivers his speech further intensifies this sense of powerlessness. Relating this advocacy of a young man on behalf on an older one to character relations in *Philoctetes* will not do; for one Neoptolemus is clearly a young man, not one who would be in a position to deliver such a speech. And yet, it is clear from this speech that actions can be attributable to age, and that a viable line of defence could be to appeal to the popular sentiment

[491] 20.3.

which preferred action in favour of public service over action in promotion of individual gain.

Finally, there are a relatively large number of the speeches of Antiphon that survive, the most clearly oligarchic of these early orators.[492] All of these works date from before the production of *Philoctetes,* and Antiphon's final contribution to the lawcourts was in his own defence for his role in bringing about the oligarchic revolution. While it was an unsuccessful speech, Thucydides claimed it to be the greatest ever made.[493] What remains of this speech is fragmentary but demonstrates his skill and the force of his argument. As in Andocides' plea, he is full of confidence in both his ability and his entitlements in the community.[494]

Common to all three of these sources in an acute impression of the power of speech. Moreover, this power is not only drawn from the talent of the individual, but also amplified via the intensity of political feeling around the time of the oligarchic revolution and the years that followed, up to the production of *Philoctetes*. Of all the years of public debate in imperial Athens, it was perhaps these in which an audience – whether attending the *Ekklesia*, lawcourts or theatre – would have felt most intensely that one's performance in front of your peers could be a matter of life or death.

[492] Debate still rages as to the whether Antiphon the Sophist was one and the same as Antiphon of Rhamnous, the orator. The orator would seem an unlikely author of the fragments which survive from *On Truth*, unless they formed part of an anticipated counter argument to oligarchy.
[493] 8.68.
[494] Fragment B.1.2.

From what we know, then, of this historical period (and if we take *Philoctetes* to be a projection, however aesthetically mediated, of the totality of contemporary civic ideologies, containing competing political views), it is one in which the degree to which young male citizens had control over their lives and influence on political decision-making would have been a hot political topic. This is unsurprising given how events relating to Alcibiades and the Sicilian expedition would have thrown a dark shadow over the political involvement of a faction of *neoi,* along with debate on the nature of the (peaking) influence of sophist educators. But the political strife in Athens, erupting into outright *stasis* before the restoration of democracy in 410, does not, it appears, result in a negative presentation of youth by Sophocles: far from it. Indeed, Neoptolemus is regarded favourably by ancient and modern critics alike. Instead, something much more sophisticated is at work. By comparing the two distinct sets of principles being offered by Odysseus and Philoctetes, the former pragmatic and democratic, the latter heroic and oligarchic, Sophocles both signals and blurs the very same limitations that each system offers. While being asked to become his true self, or to take action to win some great prize, Neoptolemus must bow to the instruction of the older man and follow their policy without question. *Philoctetes,* in fact, demonstrates that each system, stripped of its self-justifying rationale, is fundamentally paternalistic. Each system's utility is subservient to its related power structure, a structure that mirrors the father-son relationship. And an ultimate paternalistic effect closes the action with the *deus ex machina* appearance of Heracles at the end of the play to instruct the intractable Philoctetes and Neoptolemus to travel to Troy. Oligarch or democrat, sophist or *kalos kagathos*, all must bow to the power of the older.

From the very beginning of the play, the action is set within a framework of political authority. At line 6, Odysseus is quick to point out that he has abandoned Philoctetes as he was: 'acting on the orders of my masters', a claim that subordinates his decision-making capacity to that of simple executor, with policy determined by a higher authority. It is within this political hierarchy that Odysseus then addresses his directive to Neoptolemus, stating: 'it is your task now to serve in the remainder of the enterprise.'[495] This command and control structure is not surprising given the military nature of the visit to Lemnos. Odysseus sets the initial abandonment of Philoctetes in the definite past, determined by an authority at a remove, and accomplished by a middle range male figure. Neoptolemus' conclusion of the enterprise takes on the appearance of a son completing the work of his father, who began the endeavour at the instructions of a grandfather figure. The military/paternal lines of authority are exactly commensurate with each other in this case and, throughout the prologue, as we shall see, Odysseus makes great efforts to assert this structure on his interactions with Neoptolemus. The limitation that Odysseus places on Neoptolemus is not just in restricting his actions but in the information to which he allows the younger man access. Closing his prologue, Odysseus says he will impart further detail of the endeavour once Neoptolemus successfully completes his initial scouting mission, offering to reveal: 'the remainder of my plan, and the two of us may act together.'[496]

Neoptolemus, in return, acquiesces in Odysseus' requests and dutifully reports back that he has spotted Philoctetes' cave-home. Having agreed to send his own sailor away on Odysseus' bidding, without questioning this assumed authority over his own

[495] Line 15.
[496] 24-5.

kinsman, Neoptolemus reminds Odysseus of the promised extra information, saying: 'and now, if there is something else you wish to say, go on.'[497]

It is here that the age-related restriction on Neoptolemus' political authority is first and most fully articulated. Odysseus, rather than provide the background information as promised, reminds Neoptolemus of his place within a paternal/martial/political structure: 'Son of Achilles, you must be stalwart in your mission, and not just by bodily exertion. But if you hear something that comes as news to you, you must serve those as whose servant you are here.'[498] What appears at first to be rather formulaic dialogue, containing standard statements on loyalty and the reminder of familial/heroic lineage, can also be read as the clarification of the minimal control and independent agency Neoptolemus is offered in co-operating with Odysseus. It is quite clear that, since Neoptolemus is the son of Achilles and thus junior to Odysseus in age and rank, he must toe the line both in action and in words, and the entire endeavour is designed by his superiors, to whom he is completely subordinate. Furthermore, the reminder of his heritage, juxtaposed with the warning not to be swayed by unexpected news, reinforces the intractability of Neoptolemus' relationship to Odysseus, and that his orders must be carried out without question. As yet unapprised of the reality of the task at hand, Neoptolemus submits, saying: 'what are your orders then?'[499]

The following speech by Odysseus finally lays out the extent to which Neoptolemus must submit to the commands of his superiors and leaves no doubt that the task, to capture Philoctetes and his bow, must be achieved by trickery. But Odysseus also

[497] 49.
[498] 50-3.
[499] 54.

weaves into the speech the lines: 'You have not sailed under oath to anyone, or under duress, nor as a member of the first expedition', adding then, 'But I can deny none of these charges.'[500] The effect is to explain the impossibility of Odysseus approaching Philoctetes whilst also framing Neoptolemus' actions to date as completely autonomous. But by stating Neoptolemus' relatively late involvement in the Trojan Wars, clearly a consequence of his younger age, Odysseus makes it clear that the young man is as yet of unproved value to the Greeks, implicitly limiting his status within the confines of Odysseus' expectations and within an age hierarchy. Odysseus goes on to concede that the 'evil scheme',' *technasthai kaka',* is contrary to the nature of Neoptolemus. But he begins this sentence by addressing him as *pai*, or boy.[501] When Odysseus suggests some autonomy to act, or at least to mentally wrestle with the deception he has been asked to deploy, the implicit overarching message is that Neoptolemus is, after all, a young man and should do as instructed.

Neoptolemus is no fool and reflects back Odysseus' words, addressing the older man: '*Laertiou pai'*,[502] when he objects to the dishonourable nature of the scheme. Referring to his father's nature, or the *phusis* he has inherited, he states clearly his wish: 'to act honourably and fail completely rather than act dishonourably and succeed.'[503] This passage introduces the first signs of conflict between the two men and Odysseus will not be challenged so easily. He replies: 'Son of a noble father, I too, when I was young (*neos*) once, had a reluctant tongue but an active hand.'[504] This response seems designed to move the discussion away from examination of the moral

[500] 72-4.
[501] 79-80.
[502] 86.
[503] 94-5.
[504] 96-7.

questionability of tricking Philoctetes, as well as subverting Neoptolemus' natural tendency towards a heroic course of action. Indeed, Odysseus claims that Neoptolemus' objections are simply reflective of those of a *neos* and that his youth, by its very nature, will propel him on to reckless activity rather than considered strategy. This view of youth, of course, is a commonplace one. But Odysseus' application of this view flags up the issue to the audience and also challenges Neoptolemus' self-conception. If Neoptolemus' objections are a result of his youth, rather than his inherited tendency towards heroically acceptable action, his inherited excellence, demonstrated through action, would be irrelevant. Only the use of pure rationality would remain as a proper, adult approach to problem solving. Odysseus applies to the younger man the generalities often associated in Homeric literature with youth, rather than the potentially specific nature relating to his paternity, and in so doing sees Neoptolemus through the prism of his own values - that is, democratic ones, to the extent that the ideology of the military allows.

It is important to also reflect on use of *neos* here as the only example of this term in the entire play. While it is not unusual for young men to be referred to as child or boy, deployment of the term *neos* often also signifies that the young men in question are of military or political age. In *Antigone* or *Persae*, for example, *neos* is used as a signifying term for a psychological state, in part, and is used to emphasise aspects of the characterisation of these plays' younger male characters, Haemon and Xerxes.[505] Similarly, the term *hēbē* is deployed extensively in *Heraclidae* (see chapter 5) and serves to emphasise active martial responsibility. The absence of the term in

[505] *Antigone*, 728-9, 734-5. Sophocles relates *neos* as a psychological state to *dianoia* and the inflammation of *thumos* (see chapter 4). In the *Persae*, Xerxes failings are specifically linked to his youth as the Persian defeat is blamed solely on the rash actions of a *neos*, 782.

Philoctetes suggests that the psychological traits of youth are of little relevance to the action. Indeed, if the play does reflect the prevailing Athenian dominant view that young men should be severely limited in their political authority, it is perfectly understandable that the primary emphasis should be on examples of how young men can be controlled, rather than offering insights into youth psychology. The use of 'boy' or 'child' over 'youth' give the age relation aspect of character interactions a much more pronounced sense of the different levels of political power. If we are to believe, as I am inclined to, the traditional date of *Antigone* in the 440s, the historical distance between *Antigone* and *Philoctetes* is great, taking Athens from her apex of confidence, power and wealth, to a time of great uncertainty, diminished imperial breadth and depleted resources. Over such a period, it is perhaps not surprising that tragedy should reflect a critical need to control a shaken society, rather than a more liberating (for young men, at least) portrayal of the potential political power and competency of *neoi*. It is also noteworthy that Odysseus applies the noun to his own past, but does not use it to describe Neoptolemus. It is as if to confirm the receding political autonomy of young men.

The tactic is clear to Neoptolemus. 'Are you not merely ordering me to utter lies?', he throws back.[506] Thus starts a fractious exchange between the two characters as Odysseus again slowly introduces new information to persuade Neoptolemus to act on his instructions. Odysseus senses that he cannot rely solely on his position as superior in order to get Neoptolemus to act as he wishes and carefully replies to the provocative answers of the younger man. Comparison with the exchange between Creon and Haemon in Sophocles' *Antigone* is instructive. In that play, Sophocles shows

[506] 100.

Creon not to be in control of his own wits as the dialogue on Antigone's decision to bury Polynices spirals towards conflict. Here, the older man's control of the dialogue is masterful, shaping the conversation in a way to demonstrate that his suggested course of action is necessary in order for Neoptolemus to win the honour of enabling the fall of Troy. When Odysseus claims that Neoptolemus will win two prizes if he employs trickery to win Philoctetes and his bow, the deal is sealed: 'what two? For if I knew, I would not refuse the venture.'[507] Adult authority, as defined by Odysseus in the use of persuasion, is demonstrated by effect, since the desired outcome is achieved through the careful use of words.

Set against the historical context, one in which a general perception appears likely that the disaster of Sicily was in part caused by the desire by youth for a glorious victory, the manipulation of Neoptolemus by the older man would resonate with many in the audience. Unlike the historical context of *Heraclidae*, Athens would not be inundated with young men drawn in from rural areas of Attica. Quite the opposite, Athens of 409 would most likely be depleted of its younger men, many of whom would have been killed or captured near Syracuse. But there is also a strong democratic element to this section of the play. Odysseus reflects the will of the Greek Army. The fact that this army is controlled by two kings is irrelevant – Odysseus speaks for the many. Neoptolemus, by contrast, is driven by the need to be true to his nature and his heroic heritage. In short, his allegiance is to himself and his family. It is tempting to interpret the character as representative of an oligarchic way of thinking, given the focus on the issue of inherited excellence. In 409, shortly after the restoration of democracy, a society still pained by the memory of Sicily and deprived of young men would be

[507] 117.

extremely wary of the continuing role of young men both as participants in democracy and military action. Youth had become a scarce product requiring extremely careful cultivation. In this light, Odysseus' careful steering of Neoptolemus, the only youth in the play and one who is crucial to the Greek's victory at Troy, is likely to have reflected the consensus view on the proper management of youth in Athenian society. Consistent with his approach throughout, Odysseus exits the scene issuing final instructions for Neoptolemus, whom he now refers to as child, *teknon*,[508] and reveals that a sailor disguised as a merchant (as we later discover), will be sent to out to Neoptolemus if he is too slow in his efforts. Again, the young man is to all appearances given a great deal of responsibility but the use of the disguised sailor, as proxy for Odysseus, demonstrates the limitations in which Neoptolemus is permitted to operate. He might win a double prize, but it will be as the tool that applies Odysseus' craft and only with close supervision.

The opportunity for the policy of Odysseus to be put in practice arises as Neoptolemus, accompanied by the chorus of his sailors, approaches the squalid home of Philoctetes. The chorus also refer to Neoptolemus as *teknon*, but this initially appears simply as a kindly expression of a group of older men as they then submit to his authority, asking how they can serve.[509] But after they are provided with instructions to accompany Neoptolemus with which they comply, when they hear Philoctetes off stage, they interrupt with an abrupt: 'quiet, boy.'[510] Like the older Odysseus, they too then appear in possession of information vital for the task, describing the cries they hear and where they might locate Philoctetes. Before the play's namesake arrives on stage the chorus

[508] 130.
[509] 141-3.
[510] 201.

utter a warning to Neoptolemus urging: 'child, have…further thoughts.'[511] Their meaning is that Neoptolemus must mentally prepare for the imminent encounter with Philoctetes, but as sailors to the princely Neoptolemus, their interruptions and constant address of their master as *teknon/pai* would seem to undermine his authority. Furthermore, their direct advice and control of the flow of information to Neoptolemus is suggestive of a strong paternalistic characterisation. Of course, choruses consisting of older men who give advice to a main character are not uncommon. *Antigone*, again, is a case in point, where the angry stichomythia between Creon and Haemon is unsuccessfully mediated by a chorus of Theban elders. There, the chorus comment on what they judge to be the truth of what is said and rebuke the younger Haemon at times. And yet the interventionist attitude of Neoptolemus' sailors doesn't so much qualify his speech as predetermine it by the degree to which his actions and words are shaped by their direct influence. Effectively, Neoptolemus, whilst issuing orders, is managed by his older subordinates.

As the chorus finish giving their guidance, Philoctetes enters the stage and begins an exchange with Neoptolemus that sets out their dramatic background: Philoctetes recounts the tale of his abandonment by the Greeks, and Odysseus in particular, and Neoptolemus offers a greatly modified version of his history, underscoring a personal, violent fallout with Odysseus.[512] Just like Odysseus, though, Philoctetes is quick to refer to the young man as *teknon* or *pai*. However, whereas Odysseus' use of these terms fits within a convincingly realistic linguistic style, Sophocles' use of the same terms in *Philoctetes* is markedly different. Significantly, in Philoctetes' speech from lines 254 to 316, the terms *teknon* or *pai* are uttered eight times by Philoctetes, seven of which are

[511] 208-10.
[512] 219-390.

direct references to Neoptolemus. More remarkable still is the opening half of this speech, in which the terms are used to refer to Neoptolemus four times and at precise interval of eight lines.[513] Such precise use of spacing must be part of a design; it appears unlikely that such sustained repetition could be the result of pure chance. The impact on the initial framing of relations between the two men is significant. Firstly, Philoctetes appears as much older than Neoptolemus, the repeated use of 'child' or 'boy' is reminiscent of a standard utterance made by one who is used to being the eldest. But the apparently structured use of the terms creates the impression that Philoctetes can *only* view Neoptolemus via the prism of age relations. This impression could be deliberately engineered partly for dramatic purposes, allowing the impending betrayal of the apparently much older man to appear all the more brutal. But secondly, the regular repetition also reflects earlier language used by Odysseus and so carries the hidden (from Philoctetes) encoding of Neoptolemus' position as a junior member of the Greek army, and a vehicle for the delivery of his superiors' policies.

Such use of verbal repetition in Sophocles has been discussed by many, such as by Easterling,[514] and even if the exact significance must be assessed on a play-by play-basis, it is clear that this type of linguistic pattern is particular to this playwright. Critically, it brings into his work recognisable aspects of Homeric language and when combined with heroic characterisation strengthens the presentation of values of the Homeric context in a work.[515] The Homeric, and heroic, content of Sophocles' work is well attested and clearly relates dramatic action in Sophoclean tragedy to the

[513] Lines 260, 268, 276 and 284.
[514] 1973, pp.14-34. See also Budelmann (1999).
[515] See a most valuable collection of essays in De Jong & Rijksbaron (eds.) (2006), especially Davidson, pp.25-38 and De Jong, p.74.

aristocratic values of the Homeric world.[516] In the context of *Philoctetes*, and the play's innovative inclusion of Neoptolemus to allow the exploration of the best political management of youth, this intertextuality is highly important as we shall see when Neoptolemus' deception is finally revealed to Philoctetes.

Once Neoptolemus has established the basis for the deception, that he too had been treated outrageously by Odysseus, he answers a series of questions from Philoctetes on the fate of the various famous Greeks at Troy.[517] The roll-call of the dead or missing is stupendous, even without the death of Achilles: Ajax is dead, as is Patroclus and Antilochus.[518] And yet Odysseus, Agamemnon and Menelaus survive, not to mention Thersites, a character so clearly oppositional to the heroic ideal (and by extension the oligarchic ideal of inherited excellence) to cause great anguish to Philoctetes. While again heeding Rose's warning against drawing direct historical parallels and identifying a particular political position with the playwright's handling of speeches, it is difficult not to see correspondences of a more general kind with contemporary Athenian history. The reminder of the death of many young warriors is likely to have resonated deeply with a contemporary Athenian audience who were still entangled in a conflict that had no obvious end, or promise of outright victory, and who had recently experienced the horror of the decimation of the Athenian army at Syracuse.

Neoptolemus finishes recounting his deception and indicates that he is about to leave, provoking Philoctetes to protest against the latest abandonment: 'for your father's

[516] Knox (1964).
[517] 412-445.
[518] Patroclus and, as above, Antilochus are both widely represented as young men, cut down in heroic yet futile action. See *Iliad* 23.586-90, 23.756, 15.569-70 in particular for the youthfulness of Antilochus.

sake, for your mother's, my son…do not leave me alone'.[519] Philoctetes' words do not immediately sway the younger man, but they do cause the chorus to advocate his position. Neoptolemus relents, ungraciously stating, 'well, it certainly is shameful for me to appear more hesitant than you in efforts to meet a stranger's need.'[520] The response is emphatic as the older man rejoices, 'most welcome day, dearest man, and kindly sailors,' before instructing Neoptolemus: 'let us go, boy.'[521] Philoctetes thanks the older men and Neoptolemus but then reduces his role to that of guide. But his use of the term 'dearest *anēr*' ('man'), does appear to include reference to Neoptolemus and highlights an interesting point. This is the first time in the play that Neoptolemus has been referred to as an adult, and only after he has agreed to, and is on the verge of, carrying out the actions requested and advised by the older men around him.

It is at this point, with part of the deception successfully achieved, that one of Odysseus' proxies, disguised as a merchant, approaches to covertly direct events towards the planned outcome. Along with advice from the chorus, and direction from Philoctetes, yet another male figure arrives to curtail the authority of Neoptolemus. The quick interchange between the merchant and Neoptolemus not only demonstrates the penetration of Odysseus' political power, exercised here from a distance, but also introduces critical new information in the story of Helenus' prophecy of the fall of Troy. Although it would not be clear to the characters on stage whether or not this information formed part of the deception, it is an established element of the Trojan War myths and to an audience this revelation is further evidence of Odysseus' ultimate control of information. This technique of holding back information for

[519] 464-70.
[520] 524-5
[521] 530-533.

selective deployment is effective, pushing Neoptolemus and Philoctetes towards swifter action, and the episode ends with their departure imminent, albeit to a destination unknown to the older man.

The section following the stasimon, innovatively placed as the only major choral ode in the play, and creating two distinct sections, has been much discussed as a turning point in the action. It is considered the point at which the full horror of Philoctetes' affliction is brought out into the open, harshly exposing the acuteness of Philoctetes' suffering. The searing cries of pain that Neoptolemus witnesses close up, shortly after successfully acquiring Philoctetes' bow by deception, rends his dissonant psychological state in two. Exclaiming: 'Oh! what, then, am I to do?',[522] after helping Philoctetes to his feet, the young man is completely unable to reconcile the two polar forces that are represented by the principal older men of the play. On the one hand, to Neoptolemus, the aristocratic, personal code of Achilles falls like a shadow across Lemnos, the figure of the father constantly framing his self-conception: 'All is disgust when one abandons one's own nature and does what is out of keeping with it.'[523] But Odysseus' influence is still strong and the sense of obligation to the Greeks is equally as compelling. When Philoctetes attempts to take back his bow, and Neoptolemus refuses, he says: 'No, it is impossible. For duty and expediency compel me to obey those in command.'[524] It is here that Philoctetes, furious at his betrayal, roars: 'You fire, you monster through and through, you vilest model of awe-inspiring villainy… '.[525] The actions of Neoptolemus burn like flame and are now seen clearly by Philoctetes as the rash and headstrong

[522] 895.
[523] 902-3.
[524] 925-6.
[525] 927-9.

characteristics of an immature youth, certain enough to begin an endeavour but lacking the confidence to see to the end one firm course of action or another.

This explosive verbal attack serves to intensify the pressure on Neoptolemus to change tack, but it also enmeshes the speech within a Homeric co-text. A useful analysis is made by Rehm of the use of the vocative '*Ō pur su kai pan deima kai panourgias /deinēs technēm' echthiston...*,[526] which Sophocles has Philoctetes direct at Neoptolemus.[527] The apparently play-specific use of the term 'fire' can be considered as a direct reference to the language of Homer, encouraging the audience to compare Neoptolemus' actions against those of his father's in the *Iliad.*[528] Rehm argues that this linguistic formulation also underscores a narrative view: 'Neoptolemus is fire as a state of transformation, a young man who changes over the course of the play.'[529] But fire is also an element to be controlled and Sophocles has shown in *Antigone* how not only an inflamed *thumos* can lead to catastrophically reckless action, but how this condition is most often related to young men. But perhaps more importantly, the Homeric co-text is brought more fully to the fore. Neoptolemus is to be judged by the standards of two periods, the contemporary and the Homeric. The Homeric values, brought to the surface through the use of language, frame his actions within an acutely paternalist milieu whilst the contemporary audience are offered a play that appears to show just

[526] 927.
[527] Rehm (2006, pp.95-107). Suggestions that the relationship between Odysseus and Neoptolemus might reflect the older man's relationship with Telemachus, whilst faulty in many ways, does emphasise the multiple ways of connecting the Homeric to the Sophoclean. See Whitby (1996).
[528] Rehm bases his argument on earlier work by Whitman (1958) published in *Homer and the Heroic Tradition*. Whitman offers a full chapter of discussion on the uses of imagery relating to fire in the *Illiad* (pp.128-53) and provides many cogent examples of the use of the term fire as synonymous with 'heroic passion and death.' Just one example is the use of 'fire', in place of 'battle', to describe conflict in heroic language. See p.129 and *Illiad* XII 177.
[529] 104.

two ways of controlling young men, in an equally politically neutering way, reflective of the uncertain view of the political role of young men in post-Syracuse Athens. The contrast with the presentation of Haemon and Antigone in Sophocles' earlier play is remarkable, but this is unfortunately not often considered in the vast scholarship on *Philoctetes*. When scholars erroneously make a value judgement of Odysseus' behaviour, criticising his manipulative and utilitarian view of Neoptolemus, they should remember the Homeric heroes' conception of the utility of all youth, demonstrated when Menelaus says to Antilochus, 'we have nobody younger (*neōteros*) than you, Antilochus … why not race out and see if you can bring a Trojan down.'[530] The justification for such dangerous utility of youth, ostensibly for the good of the martial community, is expressed as an exhortation to perform honourable actions or deception in order to achieve a goal. Although the justifications in the *Illiad* and *Philoctetes* are different, the *Iliadic,* paternalist, appropriation of youth as apparatus is clear in *Philoctetes.* Just as youth are considered as little more than a phalanx in *Heraclidae*, and in complete contrast to the individual sketches of youth in *Antigone*, in Philoctetes the young Neoptolemus is a tool to be manipulated by the older men on and off stage.

Philoctetes goes on to beg the return of his bow in perhaps the most pitiful section of speech by a Sophoclean hero before finishing with the oddly tentative curse, 'may you perish – but not yet, till I see if you will change your mind again. And if not, may you die a cruel death,'[531] Neoptolemus' state of youthful inconsistency offers the possibility of further changes ahead. And this possibility is strengthened just moments later when in response to the chorus' query on what to do next, their master says: 'For

[530] *Iliad* 15.569-70, see introduction II.
[531] 960-1.

my part, I am affected by strange compassion for this man',[532] before petulantly asking of the chorus: 'Ah, what am I to do? I wish that I had never left Scyros. So distressed am I by what is happening now.'[533] It is difficult to imagine a more recognisable characterisation of a young man still wrestling with self-identity, unable to fully become an adult of the world of his father or of Odysseus. But for complete clarity of characterisation, Philoctetes says: 'You are not evil, but you came, I think, after learning shameful lessons from evil men', to which Neoptolemus says (to the chorus): 'what are we to do, men?'[534] Sophocles leaves no room for doubt: this young man requires the guidance of older men to make any sort of firm decision. What seemed like manipulation by Odysseus to begin with now looks like necessary micro-management of a typically inconsistent youth.

At this point Odysseus returns to the stage, accompanied by two sailors. Having, apparently, secretly watched events unfold he rages at Neoptolemus: 'You villain, what are you doing? Will you not give this bow up to me and come back?'[535] Tellingly, the stichomythic exchange that follows is exclusively between Odysseus and Philoctetes, the young man at the centre of the action is denied a voice as the older men argue between themselves, even when, again, Neoptolemus is addressed directly. Philoctetes pleads: 'Give me back my bow, boy, let it go.'[536] Odysseus, in attempt to assert his authority replies, 'This he will never do, even if he wishes. And you must go

[532] 965-6.
[533] 969-70.
[534] 971-4.
[535] 974-5. It is not, to my mind, entirely certain that this first line is addressed to Neoptolemus. After all, Odysseus uses the term 'wicked man', *kakist andrōn*, rather than using the terms *teknon, pai* or *neos* after the adjective. It would also make sense that Odysseus has returned to the action having received the report of the fake merchant and addresses Philoctetes first before quickly establishing the facts of the encounter.
[536] 981.

with it, or they will take you by force', [537] and reinforces his power of command by claiming, 'It is Zeus, let me tell you, Zeus, the ruler of this land, Zeus, by whom this has been decided. And I am his servant.'[538] After a lengthy speech by Philoctetes, where he places the blame for Neoptolemus' actions on Odysseus' influence and curses him for his actions, Odysseus changes tack in the face of Philoctetes' refusal to leave Lemnos. Using an appeal to what might be left of Philoctetes' pride, he says that instead Teucer, or even himself, could wield the bow, making Philoctetes' role in the capture of Troy redundant. The change of approach is designed to sting Philoctetes' into action and the point hits home, the outraged Philoctetes replying, 'Are you going to present yourself, decked out with my arms, among the Argives?'[539] And turning to Neoptolemus he pleads: 'Son of Achilles, will not even you say anything more to me?'[540] Odysseus instructs Neoptolemus to ignore the appeal and the moral uncertainty of moments ago, before Odysseus returned to the scene, appears to have vanished. When Neoptolemus finally speaks, almost 100 lines after being addressed by Philoctetes, he addresses only the chorus directly, instructing them to stay with Philoctetes in the hope that he will change his mind while the boats are readied for departure to Troy.[541] And personal authority has evaporated in the face of Odysseus' political dominance and Neoptolemus follows him off-stage.

The battle for control of Neoptolemus' loyalty has so far taken place entirely on stage with the arguments for expediency and glory presented by Odysseus and fealty to the Achillean honour code by Philoctetes. Neoptolemus' responses to these attempts at

[537] 981-3.
[538] 989-90.
[539] 1062-3.
[540] 1066.
[541] 1074-80.

control, including many examples of indecision or uncertainty, have likewise played out in front of the audience. Between 1081 and 1222 Philoctetes and the chorus, through a *kommos*, poetically restate their entrenched positions, ending with the repeated threat by Philoctetes that he will attempt to kill himself. Meanwhile, off-stage, the psychological conflict within Neoptolemus appears to have transformed into a singular certainty on what course of action he should take. The audience are not privy to this transformation, nor is any solid explanation given in the dialogue that follows the return to the action of Odysseus and Neoptolemus. As they enter the stage Odysseus asks why Neoptolemus has turned back, sparking off a stichomythic exchange in which the young man condemns the use of deceit[542] and the older man fixes the necessity within the designs of the Greek army.[543] In this fairly straightforward repetition of his initial doubts as to the justice of Odysseus' plans, it is unclear what has galvanised the young man's decision to side with Philoctetes. What is clear is a new found determination and rejection of Odysseus' authority. As the exchange becomes increasingly aggressive the influence that Odysseus asserted just moments before, less than 200 lines earlier in the play and not obviously at some temporal distance, has lost all potency. Resorting to explicit threats, Odysseus says: 'It is not the Trojans then, but you, we shall be fighting',[544] casting Neoptolemus as a traitor. By tossing back an impertinent, 'let be what will be',[545] this threat is met with blatant insubordination. The potential for physical violence, always present in the play, comes a step closer to realisation as Odysseus reaches for his sword to signal use of force on Neoptolemus. The young man does likewise and forces Odysseus to back down, who says resignedly, as he exits the stage: 'Well then, I shall bother you no

[542] 1228.
[543] 1243, 1250.
[544] 1253.
[545] 1254.

longer. But I shall report this on my return to the whole army, who will punish you.'[546] The direct challenge by the young man on his commanding officer, by both word and deed, is remarkable in a play where all threats of violence have focussed on Philoctetes. Comparison with the conflict between Haemon and Creon in *Antigone* is again useful. There, via reported speech, Haemon attempts to slash his father when he interferes with the young man's discovery of Antigone's suicide.[547] As Creon flees, Haemon drives his blade between his own ribs and dies, enraged at Antigone's death and his failed and shame-inducing attempt on his father's life. Within a play that is largely sympathetic to the young characters that are denied any influence on the policies of their city, this scene demonstrates the catastrophic consequences of persistent interference in the decision-making of the young by the old. Against this literary-historic backdrop, Odysseus' withdrawal before real violence occurs can be considered a tactical withdrawal rather than an undignified rout. But the contrast also offers insight into the different historical contexts of *Antigone* and *Philoctetes*. *Antigone*, produced years before the beginning of the Peloponnesian War and in a period of supreme confidence and stability at Athens, allows the full consequences of the disenfranchisement of youth to be played out dramatically. The city had not, to any great extent, endured the mass loss of young lives such as was experienced during the wars that would later threaten to unravel the fabric of Athenian society. By the time *Philoctetes* was first performed a generation had been decimated at Syracuse. Of course, the mythic material that Sophocles draws on would make it impossible for Odysseus to kill or wound Neoptolemus, but at no point do the older man's threats feel physically tangible. A genuine menace, not just a theoretical one, might be too much to bear for an audience only recently recovered from the loss of their sons in

[546] 1254-8.
[547] 1269-1321.

great numbers. And yet, as we have seen from the contemporary sources, confidence was beginning to return to Athens and whilst self-inflicted harm on young men would be an outrage too far, a willingness to commit young men to war was probably less unpalatable than just a few years before. Odysseus' actions, then, reflect a realistic strategic management of *neoi*, and demonstrate the limits of control of those who, perhaps, were well aware of their value to Athens.

The closing stages of the play show Odysseus' management of Neoptolemus to have had some lasting effect as the young man continues to plead with Philoctetes that he should leave Lemnos and join the Greek army at Troy if he should wish to gain glory, find respite from his wounds and fulfil a prophecy.[548] Philoctetes, as predicted by Odysseus, is stubbornly impervious to these inducements and persuades Neoptolemus to escort him back to Oeta. Fully aware of the probable retaliation for this treachery by the Greek commanders, Philoctetes even offers his services in defence of Neoptolemus if his homeland is attacked. But there is something amiss with Neoptolemus' quick decision to sail for home. Abandoning greater glory to satisfy a personal honour code is understandable enough, but Neoptolemus' sudden disregard for the prophecy of Helenus is altogether more perplexing. There are only two or three possible explanations for this turn of events. First, it could be that he does not really believe in the validity of Helenus' prophecy. But if this is the case, by introducing Helenus he is using a form of deception to persuade Philoctetes to travel to Troy. Secondly, he sincerely believes the words of the prophecy and is ready to depart with Philoctetes, aware that fate will lead them back to Troy no matter what part they take. This too is a deception on Neoptolemus' part. A final possibility is that he simply forgets the

[548] 1325-47.

prophecy. Causation is impossible to establish, as with all fictional characters, but if Sophocles' characterisation of the young man is consistent, and there are no other examples to the contrary, two further possible conclusions can be drawn. Either Neoptolemus has taken on some of Odysseus' traits and exercised deception in his dealings with Philoctetes, or he is demonstrating quite faulty thinking. At the end of a play that many have read as presenting Neoptolemus as a pupil becoming a heroic adult, in the mould of his father, these two possibilities would show that the picture is not so simple. When considered alongside the possibility that the play is ultimately about the control of young men, and how to manage their political or autonomous ambitions, this final unconscious revelation by Neoptolemus suggest that Odysseus has been right all along. Not only is Neoptolemus acting out of a selfish impulsive to satisfy his own heroic self-identification, but his ability to think through the issue at hand has been shown as questionable.

Finally, as the two characters are about to exit the stage, a dramatic intervention is made by the *deus ex machina* Heracles. Appearing, most likely, on top of the stage building he says: 'I have left the heavenly regions and come on your account, to tell you Zeus's plans for you, and to check your steps… '.[549] Heracles speaks with absolute authority, leaving no doubt that his control over the paths of the two men in incontestable. The prophecy of Helenus is again inferred and Philoctetes is then told of the healing of his sickness and the glory of taking Troy that await him. In contrast to Odysseus's selective presentation of information to Neoptolemus, to cajole him into action, Heracles lays out in exact detail what the future holds. Turning to Philoctetes, he says:

[549] 1413-5.

> You will go, in company with this man, to Troy's city to be healed, first of all, of your sore sickness: then, chosen from the army as pre-eminent in valour, you will with my bow rob Paris, who started these troubles, of his life. You will sack Troy and gain the prize for valour from the army; and you will send the spoils home for your father Poeas to the uplands of our ancestral Oeta.[550]

There is no room for doubt, the two men are commanded to leave for Troy and they are given no choice in the matter. Both Neoptolemus and Philoctetes immediately agree to submit to Zeus's will, as expressed by Heracles and the older man says a final, oddly fond, farewell to Lemnos. To emphasise the final submission to authority, Philoctetes's closing speech, in stark contrast to his defiance throughout the play, ends with the lines: 'send me with smooth voyaging which admits no complaint where great Fate is conveying me, and my friend's advice, and the all-subduing deity who has brought these events to their duly ordained outcome.'[551] After all the conflict and uncertainty, the original objective of Odysseus, to bring Philoctetes and his bow to Troy has been achieved. Odysseus, the ultimate strategist, perhaps could see all along that which was bound by the gods to happen. In this light, his withdrawal from the action at the point of potential physical conflict with Neoptolemus looks retrospectively like a sound decision. But Heracles does not just simply ensure a positive, and inevitable, ending for the play, his intervention reflects the theme of political authority that colours interactions between all the characters. The final, and ultimate, hierarchy is confirmed in these final lines. The gods control all mortal actions and Zeus, via the proxy of Heracles, has supreme authority. On the mortal plane, the Greeks, whilst at war, are a single community, commanded by Agamemnon and

[550] 1423-30.
[551] 1465-8.

Menelaus, and their wishes are expressed via the proxy of Odysseus. The martial command and control structure of authority, far from the revived democracy of the audience members, is reflected in the mortal and divine worlds. In this structure, the most junior members of the pantheon or the army are subject to the most stringent control. Heracles is, of course, the most appropriate divine figure to bring resolution to the play. It is his bow that will take Troy and his heroic nature both speaks to the characters of Philoctetes and Neoptolemus and relates to the events that lie ahead. But as an immortal, not an Olympian, he is a junior divinity and speaks with the proximate authority of Zeus, not of his own. This is a fitting ending to a play that is thematically rooted in questions of the establishment of authority through control of third parties. Moreover, Heracles, as we have seen in the previous chapter on *Heraclidae*, is a figure much associated with youthfulness. As such, his use by Sophocles reflects the use of Neoptolemus by Odysseus, that is, the control over a youthful subordinate.

For a modern audience, and for some scholars, the final picture of youth, in the form of Neoptolemus, is in many ways comparable with contemporary experience of how young reach a level of maturity.[552] This view is reflected in the lengthy literature on the different educational models supposedly used by Odysseus and Philoctetes in tutoring the young man. Whilst there may be some truth in these views, the historical context must be acknowledged. The Athens of the period might have found some new confidence in her ability to defeat the Spartans and their allies, but the demographic impact of the defeat at Syracuse, and the political consequences of the removal of a large number of younger citizens, would mean that the social constitution of the polis

[552] Ussher (1990, p.161) interprets Heracles choice of *andros* to describe Neoptolemus to demonstrate the young man's new found maturity.

would be fundamentally different from earlier days of democratic Athens.[553] In the Western world, fortunate not to have recent experience of such horror, it is difficult to imagine the acute value young people would have in revitalising a decimated population and concomitant importance that would be placed on their careful nurturing. In the case of *Philoctetes*, while arguments can be put forward for how young people's education must be managed, represented by the attempts at guidance of Neoptolemus' actions, this includes their management within a political system that required them to put their lives at risk. Before 413, young men were allowed to take some part in the decision-making on the level of risk they would be exposed to. But the decision-making that led up to the decision to launch the attack on Syracuse, greatly influenced, at least according to Thucydides, by a younger political faction, had resulted in disaster. The threat to a community, whether this is the Greeks at Troy or those in the Athenian audience, of young people taking decisions that would lead to military defeat on an epic scale, was not just a martial or party political issue, but one that would have existential consequences. *Philoctetes*, read in this way, offers a reflective narrative of the acute anxiety felt in society of the role of young men at a time when a new generation of hoplites was emerging but with severely curtailed political autonomy. If for aristocratic women in this and other periods, theirs was a gilded cage, for young male citizens, it was a temporary cage made of shields and swords. The political upheaval of the period could not hide the fact that without young people surviving the drawn out war with the Spartans, society could not properly function. And whatever political system was to govern Athens, without the existence

[553] 6.31, in 413, 4,000 Athenian hoplites alone set out with the initial expeditionary force, most likely supported by many more auxiliary troops, and around 5,000 hoplite reinforcements arrived with Demosthenes later in the year (7.42). The force was large and the defeat crushing. Thucydides describes the slaughter of the Athenian army as the greatest of the entire war (7.85) and 7,000 prisoners were taken (7.87).

of subsequent generations of citizens no party could survive beyond the dwindling ranks of their own gerontocracy. Of course, this applies just to male citizens and it must be remembered that older men has always had primary control over affairs at Athens, just like anywhere else in the ancient world. This paternalistic system is also reflected in *Philoctetes*, through the power relations between the male, mortal characters, between Zeus and Heracles, and between the all-powerful older divine figures and the young mortal ones. The impression that is left is of a play that reflects a society that was riddled with contradictions and divided opinions, between oligarchs and democrats, sophists and conservatives and between young and old. But most fundamentally, late fifth century Athens, although with restored democracy was still dominated by a paternalist core that determined how society was shaped and controlled. Political autonomy for young men, once a seemingly realistic prospect, was, perhaps, always just a charade.

Chapter 7

Euripides' *Orestes*

Tough Little Unit: friendship and generational loyalty

This chapter will examine how Euripides uses the relative ages of his characters in *Orestes* to create a play that directly addresses the specific historical context, one about which we have relatively secure factual sources from which evidence can be drawn.[554] As discussed in chapter 6, sources exist that refer to politically motivated assassinations by young men in Athens in the final decade of the fifth century, the time of *Orestes'* production, as well as for the growing influence of *hetairiai* on the *Realpolitik* of contemporary Athens. The play offers a dramatic imagining of the conflict between a group, modelled on the *hetairiai,* and the wider community but also contains a typically Euripidean subversion. Euripides, by setting in opposition the play's namesake, closely associated with Athens, against two older Spartan male characters, not only crystallises Athenian anxieties about youth involvement in domestic politics but dramatizes the consequences of following the Spartan policy of gerontocracy. A close reading of the play will be used to demonstrate these points and discussion will also be informed by the wider context of those other plays that contain, to a lesser extent, an emerging picture of youth-group identity. The central triad of characters in *Orestes*, Electra, Orestes and Pylades, will be discussed in relation to how they define themselves as part of an exclusive group, with their identity formed in opposition to

[554] See previous chapter for a review of the period's historical sources. Vellacott sees the play as 'the tragedy of the Athenian *demos* set forth under various guises.' (1972, p.68) and, *Troades* apart, this play has perhaps the clearest link to the political circumstances under which it was written.

society around them. The political influence of this group will be compared against the play's primary older male characters, Menelaus and Tyndareus.

The group identity dramatized in *Orestes*, largely expressed by opposition to wider society, appears strikingly similar to that theorised in recent scholarship on group identities amongst young people. Specifically, Mannheim's theory of 'generational units', as discussed in part 1 of the introduction, explains how a combination of particular social, cultural, political and economic factors can determine group identity amongst those young people who share common experiences in their upbringing. The generational unit theory, subsequently expanded on by sociologists in the twentieth century, posits that such shared experiences make a group's self-identity distinct amongst wider society, as the group identifies in opposition to their community. This opposition is then liable to be acted out through confrontation and possibly violence. *Orestes*, I will argue, presents a view of young people who form an exclusive group in opposition to their community, resulting in confrontation, and that this presentation is compelling because it contains in some ways the characteristics of *hetairiai* in Athens. This is not to say that what Euripides presents prefigures Mannheim. Rather, I will argue that in Euripides' presentation of a small group of young people in adverse conditions, a universal tendency will be revealed and that is how young people can be propelled towards violence in order both to articulate their identity (and as a corollary, that society is quick to label youth as innately confrontational) and as a reaction against a loss of control over their personal circumstances. Mannheim's observations will thus serve to validate the wider theory that tragedy, in some way informed by

empirical conditions, expresses universal tensions in democratic societies' relationships with youth groups.[555]

This chapter, therefore, has two primary aims. First, I will demonstrate that Euripides' play presents political themes relating to material political conditions in Athens, specifically the dramatisation of gang-like behaviour of those generational units associated with *hetairiai*. And secondly, I argue that Euripides goes beyond both the political present and the established mythological past to create an innovative dramatic rendering of a *polis* that has become a gerontocracy in response to the difficulties in accommodating youth in society. In effect, the play shows how Athens would look if it were to take on the Spartan approach to youth management.

The plotlines of extant tragedy are drawn from a wide variety of myth (and in one case, *Persae*, directly from historical events) but there are two dominant clusters that are repeatedly drawn upon. The first is those stories associated with Thebes and the family of Oedipus. The second is to the myth of the Atreidai. This second group is particularly important for discussion of how Athenian tragedy is shaped by historical events due to the precedent set early in tragedy's history, in Aeschylus' highly political *Oresteia*, that establishes Orestes' association with Athens and the city's political institutions.[556]

[555] Mannheim's arguments, relevant to a post-Marxist position on the relationship between society and culture, are stated in the introduction and needs no reassessment in this chapter. However, it is useful to point out the formal connections between Mannheim and Marx, through the commonality of Gramsci's cultural hegemony. Through this triad, we can see the connections between materialist/economic, social and cultural theories that relate how the ambiguous mirroring of society in art can have an empirically real impact on society by reinforcing the social constructions of the politically dominant group.

[556] The character of Orestes and the events depicted in the *Oresteia* have a long and rich history within the ancient Greek literary tradition. While there are interesting passages in

Sophocles' *Electra* and Euripides' *Orestes*, *Electra, Iphigenia at Tauris* and *Iphigenia at Aulis* all cover events relating to the Atreidai and, through the admittedly patchy evidence available, look likely to have been written towards the end of these tragedians' careers.[557] Mining the same vein of myth, it is unsurprising that these plays display similarities in plotline. In all except *Iphigenia in Aulis*, a central triadic relationship between two young men and a woman results in conflict that ends, or threatens to end in murder. There are striking similarities in the relationships between these plays' principal characters, the alliances they form in the face of adversity and their preparedness to use violence to achieve their aims. Foremost in this group, it is perhaps Euripides' *Orestes* that presents the most interesting picture of youth in tragedy. This is a play that not only makes a highly innovative departure from the myth of the house of Atreus but features three young characters who form an exclusive group in order to implement a highly aggressive, reckless plot.

The play was produced just a year after *Philoctetes* and some have noted similarities between the two.[558] These similarities would seem to suggest, in part, relative political and social continuity in contemporary Athens. As discussed in the previous chapter, between the restoration of democracy in 410 and the Athenian defeat at Notium in

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Homer (*Od*. 1.29, 298, 3.03), Pindar (*Phythian* 11) and Stesichorus (frgs. 210-219, Davies, 1991, *PMGF*) focus will remain on references within tragedy due to the large number of plays of the fifth century that include *Orestes* (argument for the exceptionality of tragedy in respect of its politically contingent content is made in chapter 2 when compared against non-tragic sources).

[557] While *Orestes* (408) and *Iphigenia in Aulis* (405) are firmly dated, there is no secure evidence for precise dating of the *Electra* plays, nor of *Iphigenia in Tauris*. But structure and style would suggest that these are all plays that are relatively late in tragedy's chronology. See Hall (2010, p.232-3, p.301, and n.15 below).With the core aim of this thesis in mind - to investigate the connections between empirically demonstrable historical views on youth and contemporaneous literary presentations of young people – I argue that the similarities in these plays support a relatively late dating in these two tragedians' careers and that these plays are the product of a particular historical milieu.

[558] West, 2007, p.32. Falkner (1983, p.290) see Euripides' modelling of the plotline of *Orestes* on *Philoctetes* as almost parody in places.

406, a renewed sense of confidence seems to have been established in the city (albeit beginning with a period of political recriminations and show trials). Historical sources for 408 do not reveal any new tensions at Athens, other than those noted in the previous chapter on the different views on how aggressively the Athenian imperial strategy should be pursued. But echoes of the catastrophic loss of young lives at Syracuse would have continued to resonate whilst youthful political factions, such as those associated with Alcibiades, are likely to have lost any direct political authority (regardless of the question of whether the temporarily increased age restrictions on political office remained in place, see chapter 6). So while society appeared relatively stable, the increasing prevalence of *hetairiai,* especially as they became associated more commonly with groups of younger men, would have caused great anxiety. The newest generation of young people would have been viewed simultaneously with suspicion, owing to the actions of past young political factions, but with the understanding that without their procreativity there would be no future for the city. These 'clubs', exclusive and impenetrable by those outside the group and perceived as being non-democratic violent associations, represented the re-emergence of a destabilising political force. While young people had been disenfranchised from political processes they appeared to be creating covert political organisations. It could take just a spark to provoke these groups to violent action.

The most well- known picture of *Hetairiai* is sketched in Thucydides, at 8.65. There, he records: 'Some of the younger men had formed a group amongst themselves and had murdered a certain Androcles… '. The description of an exclusive group, created in order to carry out violence, appears earlier in Thucydides' work, at 3.82, when he

describes that membership of a *hetairiai* (*hetairias)* required loyalty to your peer group rather than kinship in times of civil war. The reference in book 8 makes specific mention of the group formed by young men, amongst themselves, to create a self-selecting peer group defined by age, violence and a political aim. 8.54 makes the political aims of these groups clear, when Pisander is said to have made initial contact with such groups or clubs in order to set the ground for the oligarchic revolution of 411. Given the nature of these groups, their exact internal dynamic is unclear but, undoubtedly, they were designed to further the aims of their membership, completely contrary to the democratic system. And time and again, such as in famous association with the mutilation of the *Hermae*, these groups appear as agents of the rendering of political acts into violent confrontation.[559]

It must be acknowledged that such groups appear to have existed long before this historical period and may not have been the exclusive domain of aristocratic cohorts. Their composition, however, does appear to have been largely based on what Calhoun calls age and social equality,[560] forming, in other words, a generational unit. Following the oligarchic revolution of 411 such groups appear in Thucydides exclusively in relation to oligarchic political activity and post-revolution Athens appears to have been

[559] West (2007, pp.36-7) warns that references such as these are erroneously used by scholars who do not fully understand the nature of the audience to which the play was performed and who fail to see that the 'gang' has Euripides on their side. This is an important point: the text must been seen in light of the lived experience of the audience. But like is the case with any modern viewer or reader, Euripides' texts can be interpreted in many ways and West makes his own error when attributing a particular view point to Euripides. Whether Orestes *et al.'*s case is just is irrelevant. These references serve to demonstrate that the behaviour of the group would have been recognisable to the audience as the actions of young people in a time of political crisis. I place no moral value on their actions, and argue that Euripides does likewise. But it is important to see Orestes as a figure who was generally treated sympathetically by Athenian tragedians and is now in hostile territory. The territory that would provide a safe haven would be in Attica. To use the modern terminology, Orestes finds himself in the wrong post-code.

[560] 1964, pp.27-9.

rife with *hetairiai* consisting of young people.[561] While most groups with older memberships appear to have been designed primarily to assist in litigation for political ends, in contrast, the groups with younger members appear to have been centred on social activities. Moreover, these groups used violence and sacrilege towards religious rites as a way of expressing their identity and as pledges of continuing allegiance to the group.[562] Calhoun, writing in the sixties, makes comparison with the aristocratic 'Hellfire Club', and persists in translating *hetairiai* as 'clubs'.[563] If written more recently, it is probable that Calhoun would have used the Bullingdon Club as a contemporary comparison and this, too, would reinforce the class-inflected categorisation that distorts the view of these groups in the modern and ancient world. Formed of a generational unit, mixing social aims and support for mutual benefit, and with an identity shaped by often violent opposition to wider society, these groups are gangs by any other name. It appears only their aristocratic connections that allow the term 'club' to be applied without contest, revealing the fundamentally class-based interpretation that scholars unwittingly apply. When such group characteristics are related to the core of Electra, Orestes and Pylades in *Orestes*, the dramatic characterisation features all the elements of these historical 'youth gangs'. By age and status, identity formed through violence, already committed against the immediate society of the family, and for mutual benefit all three are tightly bound to one another.[564]

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[561] Although it appears that such groups also existed outside of Athens. The demagogue, Athenagoras, making his speech to the Syracusans before the Athenian expeditionary force arrived, warns of the same groups at work in Sicily (Thu. 6.38-9). Thucydides' reported speech suggested such tensions exist in all democracies yet it is only Athens that produced tragedy to express these tensions in dramatic form.

[562] Calhoun, pp.34-6

[563] pp.32-3

[564] See introduction I, for modern complexities in defining 'gangs'. I reject the criminologist's view of gangs as primarily criminal commercial enterprises, largely shaped by modern political

In Euripides' play, the opening monologue is delivered by Electra who sets out the mythic background to her present circumstance at Argos. Retelling the story of the curse of the house of Atreus, she admits her part in the killing of Clytemnestra and foresees the sentencing to death by stoning by the people of the *polis*. Her admission sets the action within a mythic sequence that is most famously realised in tragedy by Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. Produced exactly fifty years before *Orestes*, the trilogy includes the three central characters of *Orestes*: Electra, Orestes and Pylades. In Aeschylus' version of the myth, Electra, too actively helps plan the murder of Clytemnestra but is absent from relatively early on in *Choēphoroi.* Pylades, who would become a central figure in *Orestes*, is a near mute figure in the *Oresteia*, making a single contribution in the *Choēphoroi,* albeit a significant one.[565] The *Oresteia*, unsurprisingly, is focussed on the actions of Orestes, at least in *Choēphoroi* and *Eumenides*. The plays can be seen to track Orestes' passage to maturity: from his boyhood in exile in Phocis he returns to Argos as an adolescent in order to carry out the murder of his mother, finally reaching adulthood with his first political duties when he triumphs at the Areopagus at Athens. This transformation serves mainly to create a charter myth which expressed for the Athenians several discrete strands in their democratic identity—the proper role of the Areopagus, the participation of citizens in juries, the role of women in religion but not in legal or political arenas and the alliance with Argos. Following a period of political turmoil, the end of the play raises questions about the redefinition of the court of the Areopagus after Ephialtes' reforms and provides an aetiology for the establishment of

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trends towards defining all social activity in commercial terms, in support of a more nuanced view, reflecting that stated by Katz.

[565] Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers*, 900-3

the cult of the Erinyes. In this sense, the play is a directly political one, mediating the contradictions which underlay the grand politics of the day.

In Sophocles' *Electra*, Pylades appears as a mute character. Orestes appears briefly to set the scene at the beginning of the play but then withdraws until two-thirds of the way through the action to help bring the play to a mythically compliant ending. *Electra* is what is commonly seen as a typically *Sophoclean* play, focusing on the inner turmoil of a central character. Electra, Orestes and Pylades do form a group of sorts in the *Electra* by Euripides and Pylades is present as a mute character. Unlike Sophocles' *Electra*, however, Orestes and Electra share much more stage time and Electra takes a central role in devising the murder of her mother, interrupting Orestes' plotting at 647 to say: 'I shall arrange the killing of my mother.' The play contains some fairly horrific content, such as the luring of Clytemnestra to her death by making her think she is visiting a newly born granddaughter. But a sense of adventure (the exciting pursuit of a risky strategy) is palpable throughout, making the play similar to other, possibly, later plays by Euripides, such as *Iphigenia in Tauris, Helen* (412 BCE) and indeed, again, *Orestes*.

While *Helen* does not contain the characters in question, *Iphigenia in Tauris* certainly does. Although Electra is absent, Iphigenia presents a third part of a triad of characters that form a group in opposition to all those around them. While Orestes and Iphigenia are clearly the principal characters, Pylades is, for the first time in tragedy, present as a fully developed participant, one who makes regular important contributions to the dialogue. Together, the three plot a bold and successful escape from Tauris, until their

plot is discovered and they are set to be chased down by the barbarian king Thoas. A *deus ex machina* appearance by Athena is all that stops their endeavour ending in capture and execution. This structure is extremely close to that of *Orestes*. This play, in comparison, can be seen as *Iphigenia in Tauris* (*IT*) on home turf, with an exclusive group formed, based on shared cultural ties, in order to challenge the local community. But also like *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the play contains a clear sense of adventure, accelerated by near brushes with death and disaster. *IT* has been described as the archetype for all adventure narratives featuring the entertaining escapades of 'two guys and a girl'[566] and the same sense pervades *Orestes*. Euripides in writing *Orestes*, even more so than *IT,* makes this adventure story one based on the development of a youthful group that might be considered to use violence gratuitously, rather than out of necessity. If *IT* is the progenitor of travelling adventure stories, *Orestes* is correspondingly the archetypal 'youth against the world' stories, in which the audience is presented with characters with whom they may not naturally identify but through whose focalisation we are won round.[567] Early in the twentieth century (and roughly contemporary with Mannheim), sociological analysis of youth gangs in the United States found that such groups often pursued, amongst other things: romantic myth-making about the group, construction and defence of group territory, wanderlust, gang warfare, the establishment of identity through gang

[566] Hall (2012, p.1).

[567] Most recently, the British film *Attack the Block*, directed by Joe Cornish in 2011, encourages the audience to side with a thuggish set of young men against alien territorial invasion. Earlier, films such as *Rebel Without a Cause* and *The Wild One* from the 1950s are landmark presentations of this type. And while *Iphigenia in Tauris* has long been considered an influence on the structure of Xenophon's *Anabasis* (Calhoun, 1921), one wonders whether *Orestes* was similarly in the mind of the writer when he created his account of the journey from Asia Minor. That Xenophon, known for Oligarchic views, would have been in his early twenties when the play was performed makes this a real possibility. Walter Hill's *The Warriors*, from 1979, while loosely structured around events in *Anabasis*, shows how group identity is formed and expressed through violence and, to my mind contains characterisation that can be traced back to *Orestes*.

membership and initiation, and sexual intrigues, all of which are present in the activities of the group in *Orestes*.[568]

While *Orestes* lacks the exoticism of *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the Greek setting allows for the crystallisation of a more directly political message. Rather than in a barbarian country, the action takes place in a city now hostile to the youthful principals. The stakes are the same for the triadic groups but the consequences for Argos are much more severe than those faced by Tauris' King Thoas. The vigorous opposition to wider local society (supported by the creation of an exclusive group that offers the participants hope of controlling their future, created as a result of absolute political disenfranchisement) is characteristic of both *hetairiai* in Athens and Orestes' group in the play. The inter-communal violence threatened by the young aristocratic group, in response to their impending execution by the Argive democracy, and the symbolic execution of the younger generation by their own city, so reminiscent of recent Athenian agonies, carves out a unique place for *Orestes* from the same narrative fundament as *Iphigenia*. The transposition of the group conflict from barbarian territory to home soil comes as no surprise if *Orestes* (as is probable) can be dated later than *Iphigenia* in tragedy's chronology, following the revolutions at Athens that provided an historical context for stasis between political factions.[569]

With this line of argument established, that in *Orestes* we see gang-like behaviour of a generational unit, readily relatable to the young *hetairiai* at Athens of the period, a

[568] Thrasher (1927). See Introduction I, pp.29-32.
[569] *Iphigenia in Tauris* is probably to be placed sometime between 416-12, or slightly earlier. See Hall (2013, preface xxx-xxxi).

close reading of *Orestes* will draw out some of the 'gang' characteristics. *Orestes* is effectively composed of two acts. The first half presents a sympathetic analysis of the psychic impact on Orestes and Electra of their matricide, as well as the torment of impending execution. The second part appears, superficially, quite different as the protagonists launch a daring plan of escape. But from Electra's opening monologue onwards the language used in the first half sets the inevitability of the action of the second. The feverishness of Orestes, first articulated by Electra and then the young man himself, anticipates the febrile nature of the dialogue that is later shared between Electra, Orestes and Pylades. Unlike in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, or the *Electras*, the matricides have not left the scene of their crime. But the city has been their prison since the murder of Clytemnestra some six days past.[570] As Electra says, while Orestes sleeps fitfully nearby, 'This city of Argos has decreed that no one is to give us hospitality of roof or fire, or speak to us, matricides that we are. And this is the appointed day when the community of Argives will divide its vote on whether the pair of us must die by stoning.'[571] The position they find themselves in is impossible. Electra and Orestes are outcasts within their own city, unable even to seek the relief of exile. For Orestes the punishment for matricide is even more severe. As demonstrated in the introductory monologue by Electra, he is internally and psychologically terrorised by the Erinyes and faces physical annihilation by the city of Argos.[572] But the pair holds out hope that the approaching Menelaus might help them overcome their problems. It is this hope that sustains their stoic resolve through the first half of the play, and the betrayal of that hope, as we shall see, that acts as a catalyst for the young people's

[570] 39-40.
[571] 46-50. All translation of Euripides' *Orestes* from West, 2007.
[572] 34-8. Pylades is mentioned in an interpolation at 33, (West, 2007, p.183), providing some evidence for the perceived centrality of this character to the action of the play. When he finally arrives on stage he makes no doubt about his allegiance or willingness to participate in group violence.

group to devise and implement a daring plan to strike at the heart of those who have betrayed them. It will be this betrayal, and the group's reaction to it, that marks the point at which political power in Argos appears to have become gerontocratic and the play from that point becomes in part a warning of what might come by implanting anything resembling Sparta's societal structures in Athens.

Both the isolation and the tainted status of the (yet to be fully formed) group is underscored when Helen enters the stage at 71 and asks Electra, outrageously, to take some flowers to Clytemnestra's grave. She says she cannot go herself because, 'I am ashamed to show my person to the Argives.'[573] Moreover, she will not send her young daughter, Hermione, as: 'it is not seemly for girls to go out in public.'[574] Helen is far from respectable in the eyes of the local population, as Electra confirms when she says: 'you are loud on Argos' lips',[575] but even she has a place to maintain within society. Electra, on the other hand, is completely outside society. From Helen's perspective, Electra is able to undertake the most shameful activities (walking unescorted in public, placing flowers at the grave of the mother she helped to murder) without fear of incurring further shame, such is the fullness of her untouchability. While there in undoubtedly an ironic undercurrent to this exchange, Helen is all but comparing her own presentation in literature to that of Electra, the two women's relative social status is made absolutely clear. Electra has no further to fall.[576]

[573] 98.
[574] 108.
[575] 103.
[576] In the 1995 film *La Haine*, by Mathieu Kassovitz, one of the three lead characters, Hubert, remarks: 'It's not the fall that kills you, but the landing.' Throughout the film the group act in opposition to a variety of Parisian communities. After various adventures in foreign parts of the city, they return to their neighbourhood to a dramatic and violent climax. They fall but we

When Orestes finally wakes up from his fevered sleep it is clear that consciousness offers little comfort. He says: 'O friendly enchantment of sleep, help against sickness, how sweet was your coming…O mistress Oblivion of Ills (*Lēthē*), how clever you are.'[577] But he sees some sliver of hope of escape from the death penalty when Electra reveals the imminent arrival of Menelaus in Argos. Orestes, physically and psychologically wrecked, receives the news with desperate expectation: 'He's come, light of deliverance for my troubles and yours, our kinsmen who owes gratitude to our father?'[578] Menelaus represents one last shot at persuading the Argives not to stone the two of them. The news, however, offers very temporary respite as the Erinyes return to torment him. Invisible to all others, their impact is evident in the young man's convulsions. Filling with terror, Orestes begs his dead mother: 'don't threaten me with those blood-eyed, snaky maidens!',[579] before pleading with Apollo, 'O Phoebus! They'll kill me, the bitch-faced, fierce-eyed priestesses of the nether ones, dread goddesses!'[580] These lines are resonant of Orestes' reaction to the arrival of the Erinyes at the end of Aeschylus' *Choēphoroi*. There, he also reacts in terror and makes an appeal of sorts to Apollo.[581] But while in Aeschylus, the arrival of the Erinyes pushes the plot towards Orestes' exile from Argos and his trilogy's resolution at Athens, in Euripides' play Orestes has no opportunity to flee. Cornered, terrified and desperate, Orestes' subsequent speech becomes highly aggressive and confrontational, allowing a brief glimpse of what is to come. Twisting to break free of

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don't see them all land. The viewer becomes the *deus ex machina*, resolving the action in whatever way they choose.

[577] 211-213.

[578] 242-243.

[579] 255-6.

[580] 260-1.

[581] *Choēphoroi,* 1053-58.

the Erinyes' invisible grip, Orestes demands: 'Give me my horn-drawn bow, Loxias' gift with which he said to defend myself against the goddesses if they terrified me with raving fits. There's going to be a deity shot with mortal hand if she doesn't move away out of my sight! Can't you see the feathered shafts speeding out from the far-shooting bow?'[582] Orestes sees no other option in his fever of anger and seeks release through violence over his enemies. At this point, the reaction seems only to reflect his agitated mental state. He is confused and desperate, and quickly he regains some composure as his fever breaks, saying: 'What am I doing, raving and out of breath?'[583]

But while this brief episode demonstrates the acuteness of the Erinyes' psychological impact, comparison with other tragic figures shows that the aggressive response is not one widely shared by older characters suffering similar psychological torment. In Sophocles, Philoctetes seeks death in his delirium and Ajax, once recovered from his divine madness, sees only suicide as a means of escape.[584] While there are some typically Sophoclean aspects to these characters' reactions, both of these examples are of older men who find themselves with limited options to respond when marginalised within society. In *Bacchae*, the young king Pentheus, inflamed by opposition to his authority, threatens violence against the disguised Dionysus while acknowledging that he is acting against the gods too. Yet he falls so completely under the spell of Dionysus that he is unable carry out his threats in any effective way.[585] Moreover, at no point does Pentheus believe he is not in control of his city and central to society. Other young characters who are similarly constrained and angry, most notably Antigone and

[582] 268-274.
[583] 278.
[584] *Philoctetes* 797-801, *Ajax* 815-65.
[585] *Bacchae* 489-518.

Haemon in Sophocles' *Antigone*, also commit suicide. It is true that Haemon makes a half-hearted sword swipe at his father, but Sophocles has him then make a heroic exit in suicide. This (probably) much earlier play is in many ways sympathetic to young people, reflecting an Athenian society relatively tolerant of political participation by youth (see chapter 4), and traditional associations with youth and older authority are reversed. When considered against these other tragic examples, Orestes in Euripides' play presents a unique case of a young man, psychologically pained, excluded from society and with few options to influence his future, who reveals an innate tendency to violence. By the end of the play, the aggression that Orestes reveals in his delirium transforms into a dominant characteristic.

When Menelaus finally arrives, he is supplicated by Orestes, an approach from which the king recoils in horror, saying: 'O gods, what do I see, which of the dead do I behold?'[586] The reception is less than effusive in warmth and sets the tone for Menelaus's questioning of Orestes. Having already heard the news of Clytemnestra's death, the king proclaims: 'it is not monstrous that monstrous things be suffered by those who have done them.'[587] Clearly, his judgement is against the actions of Orestes and his dialogue increasingly becomes one of distanced interrogation, rather than supportive conversation. With the facts established, that the Argives are set to vote on the execution of Electra and Orestes, the young man lays out his expectation for his salvation. Saying: 'My hope runs to you for refuge from my troubles',[588] Orestes lays his rescue at Menelaus' feet. But before the older man can reply the chorus alert Orestes to the imminent arrival of his grandfather, saying: 'See now, on aged legs the

[586] 385.
[587] 413.
[588] 448.

Spartiate struggles this way, Tyndareus… '.[589] With the arrival of the old man three generations are brought together. The following passage of dialogue, first between Tyndareus and Menelaus and then Tyndareus and Orestes, reveals the extent of Spartan political power based on age. In a play that can be seen as pitting aristocratic youth against egalitarian democracy, the intervention by Tyndareus demonstrates the corrupting impact of gerontocracy on a local democracy. In essence, this section of the play imagines the political restrictions that would be placed on Athenian youth if a Spartan model of age relations were to be adopted.

Menelaus is quick to demonstrate his deference to the older man, greeting him with: 'joy to you, old sir… ', to which Tyndareus replies: '… joy yourself, Menelaus, my son-in-law.'[590] Their age-related statuses thus established, Tyndareus launches an immediate attack on Menelaus' relations with Orestes. When Menelaus justifies his support for Orestes in terms of kin obligations, the old man says: 'You have become barbarised, being so long among barbarians.'[591] Replying that compulsion by law to take prescribed action should not be the sole option amongst the intelligent, Menelaus goes so far as to accuse Tyndareus of faulty thinking due to his old age.[592] So far, this reflects the age-politics of Athens: Menelaus, as the middle-range aged male, claims his superiority of intellect in contrast to the old man. But this argument is stopped dead by a masterful speech by the old Spartan. Beginning with as summary of how Orestes has contravened Greek laws, Tyndareus goes on to illustrate his point with an

[589] 456-7.
[590] 476-7.
[591] 485. This accusation would have had interesting contemporary resonances. At 408 Sparta had established a courtship of Persia for logistical support and money. Indeed, the theatre of conflict between Sparta and Athens was largely based around the Ionian coast and Islands, and extending up to the Hellespont. Sparta was in hock to the barbarians. (Xen. *Hellenica*, 1.2-1.4)
[592] 490.

example of how the cycle of kin-killing could spiral to destroy a community. He then places an emotional value on Orestes' killing of Clytemnestra, saying: 'my poor old eye runs away in tears',[593] then, swiftly states that the gods are not on Orestes' side. Summarising his argument, the old man adds the threat that Menelaus will be banished from Spartan soil if he fails to support the verdict of the townspeople.[594] In this speech, Tyndareus delivers forensic oratory worthy of a law court, as opposed to Menelaus' fairly feeble defence, stating his case in relation to the legal, emotional and normative justifications for Orestes' punishment. But he also prejudges the final verdict of the democracy of Argos, asking Menelaus to leave the young men to be stoned to death, and adds a threat to Menelaus himself if he should disobey.

Orestes, seeing that Menelaus' attacks on Tyndareus' reasoning due to his age have proved ineffective, begins his defence by bringing into the open the age dynamic that is at play. The defence begins thus:

> Grandfather, I must say I am afraid of answering you in a situation where I am bound to hurt and annoy you. Assume our debate is not hampered by your age, which deters me from speaking, and I will go ahead; but in reality I am inhibited by your grey hair.[595]

With his obvious disadvantage stated from the outset, Orestes, sets out his corresponding arguments to justify his actions. Mirroring Tyndareus' claims, he sets out his case along similar lines. First, Orestes argues that his actions have set a precedent that will prevent the murder of husbands by their wives, then states the

[593] 529-30.
[594] 491-541.
[595] 544-50.

emotional torment he has suffered in weighing up the consequences of his actions. Finally, he points out that Apollo directed his actions.[596] On every point, he offers a direct response to each of Tyndareus' accusations and demonstrates, regardless of his youth, well developed arguments as one would hear in political debate.[597] However, Tyndareus' response to Orestes is even more aggressive than that directed moments earlier to Menelaus. Damning Orestes' insolence, Tyndareus says: '…you shall fire me the more to go for your death.'[598] Tyndareus now speaks with palpable fury, the kind of elderly wisdom offered to Menelaus transformed into barely controlled raging. 'I shall go to the Argives' convocation and bring the city crashing down on you and your sister whether it will or no, so that you pay the penalty of stoning.'[599] In the face of the young Orestes' counter-arguments, the old man will brook no opposition, whether it be from the young man or members of the Argive Council. The challenge to his gerontocratic authority is met with his restatement of the absolute power he is accustomed to holding over those younger than himself.

As Tyndareus leaves the stage, Orestes sees the opportunity to put his case to Menelaus again in the hope that the absence of the older man will allow him to make a more successful appeal. But it is already clear from Menelaus' posture that his support

[596] 550-99.
[597] Both speeches also contain, to the modern audience, shockingly sexist attitudes to the role of women in society. The chorus, rather than engage with the arguments, simply say: 'Women always complicate men's affairs in the more disagreeable direction.' (605-6) The misogyny of the tragic and mythic material here has a well-established history (Zeitlin, 1978), and Tyndareus subsequently suggests that the burden of guilt should actually fall on Electra (615-21). Of course, we can make simple moral judgements on attitudes towards gender and sexuality in ancient literature based on modern standards, but this would not allow us to fully understand ancient attitudes: the semantic and ethical frameworks used then and now are very different, such as in instances of rape. See Robson (2013).
[598] 608-9.
[599] 612-4.

for Orestes is waning as Orestes asks: 'Menelaus, where are you going, circling about in thought, treading the divided ways of decided concern?'[600] Distractedly, Menelaus allows Orestes to make another speech and the young man offers appeals to the older, comparing the support Agamemnon gave him with the assistance he now seeks, and saying how he doesn't seek the death of Hermione as restitution for the death of Iphigenia.[601] If the anticipated response is to galvanise Menelaus into martial support of Orestes, the speech is a failure. Menelaus responds: 'Orestes, be assured that I respect you and want to share the toil of your troubles…But then… '.[602] Menelaus says his company of arms is too weak to physically challenge Argos and that the best way to support Orestes is through intelligent speech in his defence. To Orestes, this amounts to a betrayal. On recent evidence, Menelaus is no match in words for Tyndareus, but more importantly the older man appears to show no loyalty to the memory of his brother, the man who gave his daughter's life in order to pursue Menelaus' expedition against Troy.

Shouting at Menelaus after he exits the stage, Orestes, understandably, berates him, 'You good for nothing but to make war for a woman, you most worthless when it comes to succouring your kin, do you turn your back on me and run away?'[603] Menelaus's actions are anathema to Orestes: not only is he to be left to face death, along with his sister, but his family ties have been betrayed. And critically, Menelaus' refusal to reciprocate the support his brother gave him at Troy demonstrates the betrayal of the age-group to which they both belonged. Orestes, deeply valuing the

[600] 632-3.
[601] 640-79.
[602] 682-7.
[603] 718-20.

bond with his generational unit, is devastated. From here on in, the only support will be from Electra and Pylades, and all others will be viewed as opponents to their cause.

As Pylades approaches he immediately confirms his loyalty to Orestes, saying: 'How are you… favourite of my age-group, of my friends, of my relations, for you're all these things to me.'[604] His unambiguous devotion to Orestes is in stark contrast to Menelaus' half-hearted assurance that he will argue against the execution. In a frantic, conspiratorial exchange, the two friends discuss the impossibility of escape and Menelaus' weak attempts at assistance. Amongst this discussion Pylades' reveals that he too is in great danger, having been exiled from Phocis by his father, Stophius, for his role in the killing of Clytemnestra.[605] This revelation, along with Electra's earlier admission of active participation in matricide, draws the three characters into an exceptionally well-defined group. All three stand accused of the crime, and all three have been cast out by their communities. The two decide together that Orestes should face the citizens of Argos and present his defence. Risking his own life, Pylades, agrees to accompany his friend for moral support and in case Orestes is struck down by the Erinyes again. The closing lines to this section, spoken by Orestes, sum up the strength of their allegiance, and make it clear that it is only one's own *hetairia* that counts when faced with such adversity: 'There you are – get yourselves comrades [*hetairous*], not just family! An outsider who becomes fused to you by his character beats ten thousand relatives as a friend to possess.'[606]

[604] 732-3.
[605] 765.
[606] 804-6. Cf. Th. 3.82.

Over the next two hundred or so lines the chorus lament Orestes' bitter circumstances, Electra returns to discover that her brother has gone before the Argive Council, and a messenger, in the form of an old man, appears to deliver the news that they have been sentenced to death.[607] Although the outcome was not unanimous, the majority voted for Electra and Orestes to be stoned to death and Menelaus failed even to attend the deliberations. The sole concession won by Orestes' own defence is that the pair of them may commit suicide rather than face a public execution. But that action is sanctioned only if it takes place on that same day.[608] Euripides' handling of the plotline, now well and truly innovated away from the established mythography, not only places the protagonists in a position of extreme peril but sets the clock ticking on the resolution of the play, by their suicide or otherwise.[609] The arguments of an old man, then reported by another old man, look set to result in the deaths of at least two young people. There is no realistic possibility of escape and the young group will be hunted down by the people of Argos if they fail to carry out the suicide by the day's close.

Their situation appears impossible and the two siblings bicker over how to accept and then carry out the judgment, grimly, going so far as to long for death by the same sword and to be buried together.[610] The play could end from here in a similar way to Sophocles' *Ajax*, but as suggested towards the beginning of the play, Orestes'

[607] 807-1012. Menelaus' absence is actually reported specifically by Orestes at (1058-9) but his absence is obvious. It seems fitting that the outcome, orchestrated by the gerontocratic Tyndareus, is delivered by another old man, albeit one sympathetic to Orestes' plight. In modern terms, this demonstrates that the judiciary and the executive of the local political order are monopolised by old men.
[608] 949.
[609] The play's hypothesis by Aristophanes the Grammarian (line 5) states that this version of the myth is not found in any other written source.
[610] 152-4.

inclination is towards action against his opponents, even if they are divinities, rather than Sophoclean heroic self-sacrifice. Pylades, who has as little to lose as the other two in the group, intervenes to steer the play in an unexpected direction. Assuming, at first, that his friend is merely attempting to restate his loyalty, Orestes says: 'Let your father have you back, don't die with me.'[611] To Pylades, the bond is stronger between the *hetairoi* than between family members and he sets out his plan. From this point on *Orestes* is unlike any other extant tragedy in its depiction of youth as a closed group, opposed to all around them and intent on causing the maximum chaos in order to gain revenge and demonstrate their agency in a society that appears to have denied them any political power. From here on in, Euripides dramatically renders the possible outcome of the actions of *hetairiai* under Spartan political age restrictions.

Pylades' plan is simple, yet devastating. He proposes that the two of them should kill Helen, as a way of exacting revenge on Menelaus. The exchange, when Pylades explains how this might be done, is very similar in structure to the earlier section in which Pylades persuades Orestes to attend the meeting of the Argives.[612] Both are stichomythic in structure, defined by rapid fire exchange of lines of dialogue. But unlike other stichomythia, such as those between Creon and Antigone and Creon and Haemon in *Antigone*, the two interlocutors are not in dispute. In typical stichomythia, as in *Antigone*, the dramatic technique allows a ratcheting up of tension between two rival protagonists. In *Orestes*, the tension that builds is between two of the main characters in combination and all those outside the group. This innovative use of

[611] 1075.
[612] 1100-1130, cf.734-797.

formal technique by Euripides underscores the absolute centrality of the group versus community dynamic in the play.

Pylades' plan is outrageous: the two friends are to enter the palace where Helen is currently residing, lock up any attendants and track down Menelaus' wife, all along pretending to be in deep lament for themselves, readying for suicide. The aim is to lay hands on Helen and kill her (in the text, Pylades states that they are literally to slaughter Helen in sacrifice [*sphaxantes*]).[613] The language here is extreme. There is no euphemism or downplaying of the violence they intend. But the image of Helen as sacrificial victim allows the audience the chance to make a number of different associations. Firstly, it links the cycle of revenge and killing back to the curse of the Atreidai, as well as the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and demonstrates how Orestes' actions are part of a horrific family narrative. Secondly, the use of this specific term makes reference to a sacrilegious act they are about to perform. They are to put on a performance of lamentation when in reality they are about to inflict terrible violence on Helen. Intentional or not, this section brings to mind the accusations made of some *hetairiai* after the destruction of the *Hermae*. Then, some young male members, famously including Alcibiades, were accused of profaning the mysteries through a false and sacrilegious parody of the rituals.[614] In *Orestes*, the young men plan to carry out a parodic performance of their ritual suicide preparations before enacting a horrific human sacrifice to slake their lust for vengeance on Menelaus. This parody of ritual appears to strengthen the group's identity (as masking behaviour to distract from the secret plan) whilst continuing to make the group's subsequent actions as offensive to

[613] 1107.
[614] Thu. 6.28. See *BICS*, sup. 65, 1996 for a thorough survey of the events and evidence.

the local community as possible. Indeed, such is their destructive intent that Pylades ends his exposition of the plan by revealing the final act: that they should set the palace alight if they are unable to find Helen, bringing down the symbolic structure of power in Argos whilst killing themselves. In Pylades' view, this will be a glorious death but in standard heroic terms, or even on a corrupt interpretation of them, it is difficult to agree.[615] Instead, Pylades offers a view that can only come from within the group, and erroneously looks towards a future mythologizing of their *hetairiai*. The glory, in this narrow perspective, can only be understood with absolute clarity when the group's self-identity is extended out to society at large. Furthermore, this is impossible, as their identity can only be coherent if it is exclusive. And this exclusivity is valued above all else, even if the only alternative to the maintenance of exclusive group cohesion is death for all three of them. Orestes, in what must be partly a comic speech, then turns to Pylades and says: 'Oh, there's nothing better than an unmistakable friend… '.[616] This restatement of commitment to friendship serves to validate the outrageous plan put forward by Pylades. The group has set a course of action, all they then need is some firmer hope that they will find a way out of the morass. Orestes ends by wishing, '…if we could just get hold of one thing. Good fortune would be ours…if some unexpected salvation were to drop down from somewhere so that we killed without being killed.'[617]

Enter Electra into the conversation. Until this point, she has been waiting quietly whilst the two friends devise the strategy. On hearing her brother's words she interjects,

[615] 1151-2.
[616] 1154-5.
[617] 1172-4. Another comedic formulation of words, pointing towards the *deus ex machina* resolution of the play.

saying: 'I think I have that very thing – salvation for you and Pylades, and also for me.'[618] As Pylades has done, Electra reveals her contribution to the group's assault on the community, proposing the kidnap of Hermione and her use as a hostage to win safe passage after they confront Menelaus with the body of Helen. [619] All three of the group have now made contributions to the plan and are fully committed to the cause. To reinforce this loyalty, and in another echo of the profanation of the mysteries, the three then chant what can be considered 'a formal invocation of Agamemnon, Zeus, and *Dike* as a prelude to the assassination attempt.'[620] The formulaic nature of this chant, clearly parodic of the type of formal utterances used before battle or some courageous act, establishes a ritual for the group. Each in turn claims responsibility for their actions and, through these quasi-ritualistic utterances, confirm their loyalty to each other. Orestes admits to the matricide, Electra to providing the weapon and Pylades to his encouragement of Orestes in the murder. The group chanting appears to galvanise each group member, the song propelling them along their path to destruction.[621] The Section ends with a summary by Pylades of the exact nature of the

[618] 1176-7.

[619] 1191-1202. Hermione seems like an innocent bystander in the play and Electra's kidnapping of her has been considered cruel (Vellacott, p. 77) or even a 'crowning baseness' (Mullins, 1940, p.156). And yet, this is the daughter of the woman who the group consider began the current cycle of violence and whose father is the man who betrayed them. In this light, she could not be more guilty by association. In modern-day girl gangs, the female subsets of male groups often take out revenge on female associates of those to whom the males wish to cause harm. Electra's action here fits the pattern of a parallel course of action to the males', attacking the same target group through their women. See Sikes (1997).

[620] West (2007, p.266).

[621] A classic modern example of the use of group chanting in literature is found in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. The lines: 'kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!' whilst used before killing a wild boar, also marks the transformation of the group into one that defines itself through the violence it carries out. And it horrifically prefigures the later killing of Simon. It has been argued that Golding drew heavily on Euripides' *Bacchae* when constructing his work (Dick, 1964, pp.145-6). While some arguments made for the comparison I consider to be spurious, such as the failure to integrate the Apollonian and the Dionysiac, the direction of travel of both works is strikingly similar. See chapter 9.

group: '…for the trio of allies face a single trial, a single settlement: one sentence for all of us, either life or death!'[622]

The frantic following section of the play involves the frenzied attack by Pylades and Orestes on Helen's attendants, reported by a Phrygian escapee,[623] their failed attempt at the murder of Helen, the capture of Hermione and the setting alight of the palace.[624] The action, largely narrated by the Phrygian, is fast-paced and explosive. The scene's contrast with the opening sections of the play is stark, but not entirely unexpected. The slaughter of the household attendants by Pylades appears to be the real enactment of the destruction Orestes fanaticised about in his delirium at the beginning of the play. The final scene must be the one that made *Orestes* one of the most popular of all plays in the classical period. Appearing above the stage, in an area of the set usually reserved for gods or those about to commit some horrific act, such as Medea in her name play, Orestes' and Pylades' re-entry to the action would have been a real *tour de force* of dramatic production.

With Menelaus hurrying to the palace, having been informed of the pair's actions and under the impression that Helen has been slain, Orestes and Pylades thus appear on the palace roof. This re-entry must have been quite some sight: Orestes has Hermione hostage, his sword to her throat, whilst Pylades holds aloft a flaming torch as smoke begins to rise from the building. Orestes looks down on Menelaus and addresses him:

[622] 1240-5.
[623] 1493-5. The two are described by the slave as like 'Bacchants at a mountain cub', perhaps an early indication of Euripides' creative direction, the total societal collapse caused by the maenads in his following play, *Bacchae*, is in many ways the hoped for conclusion by the group in *Orestes*.
[624] 1310-1554.

'you there',[625] before threatening: 'I'll smash your head in with this coping stone'[626] if he attempts to enter the building. Unsurprisingly, Menelaus is furious, returning Orestes' threat, saying that if he harms Hermione, 'you'll regret it – that is, unless you escape on wings'.[627] But this threat is quickly shown to be empty, as Orestes makes to slit Hermione's throat Menelaus pleads with the young man not to carry out the act.[628] But the price Orestes asks of Menelaus is perhaps too high, demanding that Menelaus fulfil his promise to persuade the Argive Council to not only rescind the death penalty on Electra and Orestes, but also to reinstate the young man as king of the city. With Orestes as spokesperson, the young group are demanding complete control of Argos by use of the most outrageous acts of violence. Of course, this plan is completely unrealisable, and Orestes' demands show the levels to which the group have created their own parallel reality outside the Argive community. As if to confirm this febrile thinking, Orestes, browbeats the older man, who concedes, 'you've got me'.[629] Orestes then immediately instructs his co-conspirators to set the whole palace ablaze, in contradiction to his implied promise to Menelaus. Menelaus regains some composure, seeing that Orestes is completely unhinged, and sets about breaking down the door to the palace.[630]

[625] 1567. According to West (p.288) a 'startling rude way for a young man to accost a senior relative.' Rude, yes, but hardly unexpected, given the build up to the scene. All Orestes action are calculated to give the greatest disrespect to those he believes have betrayed him.
[626] 1570.
[627] 1592, another allusion to *Medea* and an unwitting prediction of the play's conclusion.
[628] 1598. In the play's context, this *volte face* demonstrates the weaknesses of Menelaus' character. He is the antithesis of stoic resolve. But to modern readers his capitulation is redemptive, he is willing to lose face in order to protect his daughter.
[629] 1617.
[630] Interestingly, during the events inside the palace, Orestes appears untouched by the Erinyes. It is as if the madness caused by his extreme reaction against society is enough to block out any other form of mental affliction.

With the disaster seemingly inevitable, the conflagration looks likely to take down the entire cast of participants, Euripides deploys a *deus ex machina*. The already busy stage is joined by Apollo and a mute Helen, most likely also on the upper platform of the *skēnē*. The god reveals that all the events since the beginnings of the Trojan War are of their design and he sets out the future lives for Electra, Orestes and Pylades; Helen, Hermione and Menelaus.[631] Peace is to be made through his direction. The end is very similar to that in *Iphigenia in Tauris*. The angry older man is easily bought off, the young man is reassured that he was right in his actions all along and the female protagonist is allocated a not entirely satisfactory future life.

Euripides' *Orestes*, then, provides two age-group related warnings. First, the playwright offers a picture of what might become of youth groups if they are disenfranchised from society resulting in their political energies being channelled through covert groups which the historical context shows results in violence. The conditions which necessitate the actions of Orestes and his gang, subsequent to the matricide, are thus caused not only by the group's own actions but by a failure of society around them. And secondly, the play shows specifically how the application of gerontocratic politics, when applied to control of youth groups, will make the problem even worse. The scene is complicated by the clear conflict between democracy and aristocracy but it is the power of the oldest man, Tyndareus, which ultimately prevails until the intervention of Apollo. Perhaps, then, Euripides presents an analysis of how a city must be kept in political tension, but that outlets for pressure must be inbuilt, including political integration of *hetairiai*. For a democracy to function effectively it

[631] 1625-1665.

must be completely inclusive of the *dēmos* in totality. And while the threat to this stability comes from oligarchic groups, the imposition of gerontocratic values will only help propel democracy towards dissolution.[632] Without the proper inclusion of young people in political processes this cycle is likely to continue. Euripides, in his final direct address to the people of Athens before his self-imposed exile to Macedonia, presents the future of a city without solidarity. In the face of Spartan aggression they must stand together or fall. In *Orestes*, Euripides shows what might be. In *Bacchae*, he accurately dramatizes what will be.

[632] At the time of writing, huge political demonstrations in Turkey are being framed as the reckless youth, unable to properly articulate their aims, against the conservative older establishment. If read in the same way as *Orestes*, this conflict appears the natural outcome of a failure to include youth in political processes. In the case in Egypt since the 2011 such a failure caused massive loss of life but has only resulted in the replacement of an authoritarian regime with a reactionary one.

Chapter 8

Euripides' *Bacchae*

Thebes falls apart: a gap in the generations and political failure

Euripides' *Bacchae*, and the play's two companion pieces (as performed together), *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Alcmaeon in Corinth*, were produced at a point in Athens' history that was to witness the collapse of her imperial power and the half-century long experiment with mass, direct democracy. In 405, the almost certain date of their posthumous production, Athens was under siege, her fleet destroyed and with it access to the supply of grain through the Bosphorus in the east.

These plays, as a product of their time, emerge from the material conditions in Athens when a catastrophic defeat to Sparta was all but assured. Unsurprisingly, *Bacchae* and *Iphigenia in Aulis* contain highly negative portrayals of those in power and their political decision-making (*Alcmaeon in Corinth* exists only in fragments, and it is practically impossible to reconstruct accurately the content, *a fortiori* to determine any contemporary political resonances.)[633] In both fully extant plays, the 'mob', led by a charismatic individual, is cast as the force that defeats individual decision-making,

[633] It is deeply regrettable that only small fragments of *Alcmaeon in Corinth* are extant. As Hall has pointed out (2004, p.1; 2010 pp.367-8) what lines remain from the play do suggest significant thematic similarities between the tragic plays of this tetralogy in relation to the treatment of children by their parents. Furthermore, fragment 75 goes, 'Son of Creon, how true then it has proved, that from noble fathers noble children are born, and from base ones children resembling their father's nature.' (Collard & Cropp, 2008, p.91), and this frames the play's action within an intergenerational framework. As we shall see, in both *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Bacchae*, there are scenes of generational rupture that could make this line take on an ironic significance. Unfortunately, we shall never know if this was the case unless new papyrus finds transform our knowledge.

whilst young characters are well placed to change the course of events but fail to do so. In this chapter, I will investigate how this picture relates to the contemporary political scene. Specifically, I shall argue that Euripides, through his writing, laments the loss (or marginalisation) of the great political figures of his generation, and with them the stabilising political influence of a middle age-range. Analysis will include brief discussion of the potential ancient understanding of 'crowd psychology' and how this concept relates to the social construction of the normative view of youth in times of political crisis.[634]

With Pericles long dead and Alcibiades an outcast from Athens, historical sources, encoded with their authors' biases, suggest massive miscalculations in policy and executive decision-making that irreversibly damaged Athens. While in *Iphigenia in Aulis* the full range of generals are involved (Menelaus, Agamemnon and Odysseus, albeit off stage in the case of the last), decisions to act are rashly made, reneged on, reaffirmed and then enacted, seemingly without the application of any firm control by those in authority. In *Bacchae*, there is even less sense of control of events by Thebes' nominal authority, the young king Pentheus. And in this play the absence of a middle range of male citizens reinforces the sense that the city's ability to formulate policy that is supported across generations has been lost. Pentheus, it will be argued, is shown to be the apparently lone representative of the final generation of a dynasty

[634] This discussion is largely informed by Freud, through his 'Group Psychology' essay that draws heavily on earlier work by Le Bon and Krasovic. These sources are essentially sociological in nature and I avoid anachronistic application of psychoanalytic theory to the plays: this chapter focuses on socio-political failure, rather than individual psychopathology. For a psychoanalytic interpretation of Pentheus see Sale (1972); for a retrofit of modern psychoanalytic theory on to the play, see Devereux (1970).

that by now has become morally and authoritatively regressive, internally opposed solely by ineffective old men.

First, a note on the concept of middle-range absence. The absence of male citizens or rulers between the ages of qualification for the *Boulē* and exemption from military duty (thirty – late fifties) in *Bacchae*, and as demonstrable in many other tragedies (from Aeschylus' *Persae* onwards), has clear mythological antecedents. The myths of the cyclic epic *Nostoi* (only partially available through fragments and later sources[635] and in non-cyclic form as constituted by the *Odyssey)* offer an array of stories in which male authority figures leave their *polis* to fight abroad and endure a difficult homecoming. Most famously Odysseus, in the *Odyssey*, not only struggles to return but leaves behind his young son, Telemachus, who fails to effectively oppose a gang of unruly suitors. When dramatized by tragedians, the adaptations of the *Nostoi* myths are an articulation of the risk to one's authority, such as in the fate of Agamemnon in the *Oresteia*. In *Bacchae* it is something of a mystery as to where Pentheus' father and his uncles are.[636] But this play offers an echo of a Homeric homecoming setting where the authority figure fails to return.[637] This tendency towards failed homecomings in

[635] Evelyn-White (1959) and, more recently, West (2003).

[636] Cadmus mentions Pentheus' father, Echion, at 213, but only to state that it is the father's son to whom Cadmus has given authority of rule. When the chorus mention Echion at 265 and 540, it is to unfavourably compare Pentheus' intentions with those his grandfather would make. At 992-6 (and repeated at 1011-6) the chorus make this comparison again, but more strongly reject Pentheus' mortal character against the chthonic origins of Echion. Pentheus' aunts, Ino and Autonoe, and mother, Agave, play major roles in reported speech (especially at 676-774) and Agave does so in a major section at the end of the play, but the play makes no mention of the whereabouts of their husbands. Cadmus' explicit sanctioning of Pentheus' authority, and the absence of all other middle-range male characters suggest, to me, that they are to be understood as being away together.

[637] Hall (1997, pp.107-9) argues that, in part, this outcome is likely to be due to the lack of supervision of a community's women. While *Bacchae* fits with this model, I focus as much on the response to these outcomes as their causes, that is, the incompetent political decision-making that fails to mitigate risk to the city.

literature, perhaps, is an imaginative prolepsis of the (presumably frequent enough) occurrence of very real failed homecomings as the outcome when a war fought overseas is lost. In this chapter, I will show how in the absence of rational authority in these plays, a young character becomes central to the action but is presented, in some way, as politically deficient. The actions of the young character in each case, inadequately guided by an older generation, help only to lead the plays towards death and destruction. A review of *Iphigenia in Aulis* and the play's political themes follows, before a close reading of *Bacchae,* which is the primary focus of this chapter.[638]

First, though, a brief summary of the political context will help to establish the environment from which these plays came. A number of surprising Athenian victories followed the Sicilian debacle of 413 and these events appeared to reinvest the Athenians with a sense of control over their destiny (see previous chapter). For a time, the city had regained enough confidence to refuse a number of opportunities to reach an armistice with Sparta. The post-Thucydides sources are a tangle of accounts, often drawing on the same material from the fragmentary *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* (see chapter 6) and heavily infected by political bias (Xenophon, in particular).[639] But it can be gleaned that the political turmoil that preceded and followed the Sicilian expedition appears, whilst seemingly having receded, to have had a continuing political impact. Following the battle of Arginusae in 406, a vitally important naval victory for Athens,

[638] It has long been noted that the play is set in a city where political leadership has failed. Indeed, Thebes, through all her representations in tragedy, is a city that is in a perpetual state of political trauma (Leinieks, 1995, pp.11-48). But the role of youth in either correcting or reinforcing political incompetence, while featuring in all the plays, has not been consistently treated by scholars. With Thebes to an extent taking the place of an 'anti-Athens', see below, it would be useful for future research to include an in-depth investigation on how plays set in Thebes use aspects of Athenian self-definition relating to youth in society.

[639] The other major sources being: the pseudo-Aristotelian *Athenian Constitution*; Diodorus Sicilus, *Bibliotheca* and Lysias, *against Demosthenes*.

those politicians remaining in Athens (not including Alcibiades, who was deposed from public office earlier in the year)[640] took the decision, circumventing proper judicial process, to execute the Athenian generals who had overseen the fighting, ostensibly for their failure to save surviving Athenian sailors who were cast adrift in stormy seas. In Xenophon's view of the debate,[641] the city's politicians offer no strategic direction and the authorial voice has it that decision-making is subject to obvious manipulation by figures such as Theramenes. Of course, Xenophon's well-known negative opinion of democracy colours this account, to the extent that the most famous democratic politician of the era, Cleophon, is practically written out of his history. But the fact that the generals were all sentenced to death without a proper trial is absolutely certain.

The precise nature of both the political manoeuvring and the vote for execution itself are outside the scope of this work.[642] What is clear is the dysfunction of political decision-making in Athens, disabling the city's ability to see beyond internal political threats, thus reducing the ability to address properly the wider issues at hand. This briefest of summaries shows that Euripides would have most likely composed his final works while Athens was in a state of perpetual political turmoil, even during occasional successes in the Ionian theatre of war.[643] Indeed, a state of political paralysis is

[640] Xen. I.5.16-18.
[641] I.7. 1-35.
[642] See Andrewes (1974, pp.112-122). This short article, by including the crypto-Xenophon description of Athens at the time as suffering from 'mob rule' and 'hysteria', very much demonstrates the dangers of extrapolating social factors from Xenophon's purely political, and oligarchic, account. But at the very least it reflects the scholarly consensus for acute political trauma in this historical period.
[643] The final years of Euripides' life are unreliably documented but the biographical tradition places Euripides at Macedon at some point during the final decade of the fifth century. It is more certain that he was dead when the plays were produced by his son (see *Frogs*, Aristophanes, 66-82). Nonetheless, by composition and the production the plays appear just as tightly responsive to the milieu of Athens as earlier Euripidean works. Geographical distance, if

represented in both *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Bacchae,* where erratic decision-taking results in the failure to apply any clearly rationalised line of policy. Euripides, through the plays in question, seems to suggest (not unlike Xenophon) that without a stabilising influence, moderating the indecision of weak political leadership and the irrational power of 'the crowd', a society is well on the path to complete breakdown. I will firstly demonstrate how this is the case in *Iphigenia in Aulis*, before investigating more fully how this political failure relates to youth and generational degradation in *Bacchae,* with particular emphasis on the first half of the play, as it is this section that contains the greatest political content.

In *Iphigenia in Aulis,* Euripides presents the version of the myth of Iphigenia's sacrifice in which (the transmitted text has it) Agamemnon's daughter escapes death when Artemis dramatically replaces her body with that of a deer. While this substitution is interesting in itself, it may well be the most problematic of a number of later interpolations in the play,[644] it is the discussions between the Greek generals that lead up to the dramatic climax that are most relevant to analysis of the playwright's handling of political themes during the final stages of his career, and of Athens' 'golden' period.

In brief, at the play's opening Agamemnon is in great distress, having agreed to sacrifice one of his daughters, on the instructions of the seer Calchas. After initially refusing to allow his daughter to be killed he was persuaded by his brother, Menelaus,

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there was any, appears to have little impact in separating the product from the producing culture.

[644] Hall, 2010, pp.290-1.

to carry out the murder and sent for his daughter under the pretence that she was to be married to Achilles.[645] The awfulness of his acquiescence to his brother has become fully comprehended by him and Agamemnon orders an old man to send new instructions to Clytemnestra, asking her not to send their daughter to the Greek camp at Aulis.[646] But the message is intercepted by Menelaus and he furiously confronts Agamemnon. The two argue, and it looks as if Agamemnon will not be swayed from his decision to refuse the sacrifice, when a messenger announces the arrival of Clytemnestra and Iphigenia at the camp. Agamemnon's resolve then breaks, and he concedes defeat to Menelaus. Oddly, (the hitherto implacable) Menelaus, seeing the torment his brother is suffering, offers to reverse his decision to lead the Greeks to Troy, and to disband the massed armies of the various *poleis*. Surprisingly, Agamemnon refuses the offer and decides to persevere with the original plan to sacrifice Iphigenia, whilst continuing the pretence of preparing her marriage to Achilles. When asked by Menelaus why he would do such a thing, Agamemnon says that he feels compelled by the Greek army, who are poised for war.[647] Agamemnon clearly feels a weakness in his authority and Menelaus recognises this anxiety, saying: 'do not fear the mob [*ochlos*] too much'.[648]

[645] There are echoes of Euripides' *Electra* here. In that play, Clytemnestra is lured to her death on the pretence that she was to see her newborn grand-daughter. Although the influence of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* means that Clytemnestra is often considered as scheming, she is just as often on the receiving end of murderous plots. Indeed, the actions of Agamemnon in *Iphigenia in Aulis* offer an example of how not to conduct such a plan. Clytemnestra's actions in the earlier Agamemnon by Aeschylus are much more polished, perhaps evidence for the earlier misogyny for which Euripides is a useful corrective.
[646] This is another potential interpolation. See Michelakis (2006, pp.105-114).
[647] 514.
[648] 517.

The brothers can hardly be presented in a more negative light, since neither even shows the strength of character to acknowledge his own agency, blaming both fate and pressure from the martial community for their proposed murder. While the play's other characters are much more sympathetic, the interactions between Clytemnestra, Iphigenia and Achilles being at times heroic and moving, these individual figures also show indecision and a clear hostility to the rank and file of the army. At 1357, Clytemnestra, as the army encircles, states: 'a crowd is mad for crime', (*to polu gar deinon kakon*). Although Odysseus is picked out earlier on as a particular threat, when he is effectively accused of being a demagogue,[649] it is the faceless mass of ordinary soldiers that the various aristocratic characters suggest is the greatest threat. Achilles, at first a steadfast opponent of the proposed sacrifice, is obscenely quick to accept Iphigenia's decision to allow her sacrifice to go ahead, having been cowed by the massed ranks of the Greeks.[650] As Michelakis points out, Achilles' actions demonstrate the 'failure of an adolescent to change the world of the adults, a failure that results in the loss of his name and personality.'[651] This failure in action and consequential loss feature as a central characteristic of youth in *Bacchae* too.

The play then appears to contain three major political themes. One is the absence of serious political authority. Both generals have mobilised a large number of soldiers, already sent them far from their homes and have them ready to die for Menelaus' cause. But they are paralysed with indecision when the issues they face become more complex. Moreover, once they do settle on a particular position it is because they

[649] 525-7.
[650] 1345-1416.
[651] Michelakis (2002, p.143). The figure of youth, here, is as ultimately powerless as the figure of the old man at the start of the play who is unable to successfully carry out his orders.

appear forced to do so, blaming fate or the weight of expectation from their fellow Greeks. In short, the play demonstrates the inability to formulate proper policy without generals in possession of true leadership qualities. Secondly, throughout the play the ranks of soldiers, specifically named as a 'mob' (*ochlos*), or as an undifferentiated group (*to polu*), are presented as a threatening, irrational group with whom neither general can satisfactorily engage. The picture is very similar to that painted by Thucydides in which the aristocratic Alcibiades criticises a large group of sailors as a mob (see chapter 1, p.35). Thirdly, the old messenger and the young Achilles are both able to influence the course of events but fail to do so adequately. This theme, of the impotence at each end of the generational scale, underscores the political failure of the middle-range.

The overall effect is to show an environment in which control over society has been lost, in part due to a lack of leadership, in part due to the power and fury of the mob, further incited by a demagogue and exacerbated by the failure of young and old to act. And if the Greeks are to even reach Troy they must make a symbolic sacrifice of the next generation in the form of Iphigenia; all the more relevant to contemporary Athens where similar arguments appear to have played out (when many young lives had been sacrificed at Sicily to no advantage, the citizens having been propelled down this route by a young political faction). The small group of aristocratic characters who are given a voice in this play, as contrasted to the voiceless mass of soldiers, appear oddly powerless against a rough democracy of the military camp. This is not to say that Euripides intimates a particular sympathy with the oligarchic or democratic side, since both sides appear monstrous, but an Athenian audience would no doubt have left the

performance reflecting on the nature of political decision-making not just witnessed on stage, but in their lawcourts, *Boulē* and *Ekklēsia* too.

These political themes, as well as ones associated with the killing of young people by their parents, are even clearer in *Bacchae*. And it is in this play, and it really is very stark, that Euripides points to a kind of societal-generational failure, represented through the absence of a male middle-range citizenry.

In the play's prologue Dionysus offers a view of his recent and distant history (his journey from Asia and the story of his birth) before turning to immediate events.[652] He has arrived to demand that he is honoured as a god, threatening to lead his maenads into battle against the (male) Thebans if he is not satisfied. He is explicit in his aims, and about his potential recourse to violence should things not go his way. Indeed, he has already launched a pre-emptive strike through the madness which he has inflicted on the female population of the city. And the account of the fall of various cities to his cult appears as evidence for the absolute control he has enforced elsewhere: these cities' identities are now defined by their submission to the cult.

In a straightforward reading, this is a most sinister introduction to a play, and to a character. Dionysus is, perhaps, the most discussed mythological figure in classical scholarship and he has long been associated with the powers of chaos and

[652] 1-63

destruction.[653] Here, too, Dionysus appears as the embodiment of social and political dissolution and, given his divinity, the prognosis for Thebes and Pentheus cannot be anything but poor. No doubt some in the audience witnessing the play at its first production[654] would be long familiar with the reality of siege warfare, as experienced both when defending allied cities and colonies, and as part of a besieging force. It is feasible that they would have experienced a sense that what they were about to see on stage was similar to the threats they had experienced and inflicted elsewhere. They had also seen 'siege' plays set at Thebes, most recently Euripides' own *Phoenician Women* of just four years earlier, in which dialogues had been delivered from the ramparts themselves in striking *teichoskopia* scenes. Now, before the seven gates of Thebes stands an agent of the destruction of political and social systems, as well as the physical form of the city. His story of his journey from Asia Minor to Thebes (little more than 40 miles away from Athens, described by Zeitlin as 'the negative model to Athens' manifest image of itself'),[655] may have similarly have triggered resonances of personal experience in war in the minds of the audience.[656]

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[653] The formulation of the binary opposites of the irrational, destructive Dionysiac forces versus the ordered Apollonian ones has been commonplace at least since Nietzsche wrote *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1872. But this is a purely modern comprehension, since the opposition of the two doesn't stand up to comparison with these characters' appearances in ancient literature. Apollo, for example, is the indirect cause of Orestes' pursuit by the Erinyes, thus causing temporary madness (Aesch. *Oresteia*; Eur. *Electra*, *Orestes;* Soph. Electra). But it is true that Dionysus was associated with a whole range of dissolutive qualities in the ancient world, evidenced by the huge variety of literature, sculpture and epigraphy that link him with wine, sex and madness. See Seaford (2006).

[654] As n.3, the actual date of production is not entirely secure. An ancient scholion (Schol. Ar. *Frogs*. 67) suggests the play was first produced posthumously. If Aristophanes' *Frogs*, in which Euripides is brought back from the dead, can be securely dated to 405, then there is a clear *terminus ante quem*. If a specific date of performance cannot be determined, the plot surely belongs to the precipitous period immediately before the defeat of Athens.

[655] Zeitlin (1990, p.113). Moreover, the use of Thebes can be judged to allow the projection of debate on issues critical to Athens on to another scene, where the full tragedy of miscalculation can be safely displayed. pp.144-5. See also Hall (2011, pp.51-63).

[656] For years the Spartans had courted Persian royalty in the hope of military and financial assistance. Now they had it and it resulted in a string of Spartan successes in the east. After the Athenian failure at Notium in 406, bad news continued to pour in from the theatre of combat,

The sense of menace and intent to act is reinforced during the parodos, when a large number of chorus members, in role as Asiatic maenads, enter the stage.[657] Their ethnicity again underscores the geographically specific source of the threat to Thebes and their ecstatic chanting, including a 'specific exhortation to proceed',[658] imbues the scene with a febrility, an atmosphere of cult fervour that is impermeable to external intervention. Although metrically very different, the effect given is similar to that in Euripides' *Orestes*, when in stichomythic exchanges two young characters provoke each other into embarking on a murderous campaign.[659] The *folie à deux*, as performed in *Orestes*, is in this instance presented as a *folie à plusieurs.*[660] But, as we

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(and even the Athenian victory at Arginusae proved to be a Pyrrhic one), now located largely along the cost of Ionia and towards the Bosphorus. Persia, forever a subtle menace, once again became a real threat, and the base of political operations in support of Sparta was Sardis, where Cyrus held the satrapy (Xen. *Hel*. 1.5.). This young prince of Lydia and Phrygia could well be on his way towards Athens at the head of a Spartan army. In the play, the menacing figure of Dionysus, appearing before the city gates demanding unquestioning honour and leaving a host of conquered cities behind him in the east (having established cults in Phrygia and Lydia), traces a similar path towards mainland Greece. (There are many character traits of Dionysus in *Bacchae* that would link him to the barbarian east. See Hall (1989) for the stereotypes involved, included an obsessive desire for honour, effeminacy and desire for conquest. *Persae* by Aeschylus draws out these common Greek views on Persians most clearly). This is not to say that Euripides' text can be used to demonstrate what would be a historically reductivist link between play and historical events. But in *Bacchae*, the presentation of such a threat in an 'other' Athens provides the audience with a chance to witness the implications of a faulty response, but one they might recognise as potentially replicable by their political leaders facing a superficially similar challenge. See Hall's forthcoming 'Euripides, Sparta, and the Self-Definition of Athens'.

[657] The standard fifteen members of the Euripidean model (Calame, 1997, p.21) would have presented a forbidding sight, the dark mirror image of the chorus that in Euripides often frets, rather than menaces. It is understandable that staging and financial constraints often reduce the number of choral members in modern productions down to a much lower number but this, to my mind, diminishes their presentation as a significant group, whether this be as representative of a city's citizens, or a threatening mob.

[658] Seaford (2001, p.155).

[659] *Orestes*, 1100-1130. See chapter 7

[660] Maenadism in general, and its presentation in *Bacchae*, has an extensive bibliography. But this chapter is focused on the response of the polis to the threat posed by Dionysus and Bacchae. For further discussion of the nature of Maenadism see, in particular, Henrichs (1978, 1993, 1995).

shall see, such an exclusive, fantastical understanding is also evident in the relationship between the two elder statesmen of Thebes, Tiresias and Cadmus.

As the chorus gather outside the gates of Thebes, on stage surely a sight immediately recognisable as a besieging force, the response from the first Thebans to appear is surprising.[661] Tiresias arrives, clearly in a state of excitement and says, calling for Cadmus to join him, 'He himself knows what I have come about, and the agreement I made with him, an old man with an older one, to make thrysoi and wear the skins of fawns, and to crown our heads with ivy shoots.'[662] The joyfulness of Cadmus, too, is immediately clear. Emerging from the on stage royal house, Cadmus exclaims: 'O dearest friend – for I recognised your voice when I heard it, a wise voice of a wise man...',[663] before making explicit his acceptance of the Dionysiac cult, echoing Tiresias' words that they speak one old man to another, repeating that the seer is wise and stating that they both have forgotten their ages.[664] They feel they are no longer *gerontes*, they are now both young men.[665] Indeed, such is the transformation that when they both decide to travel to join in the Bacchic revels by walking, rather than by chariot, in order to demonstrate their complete subservience to the cult and so give

[661] The staging is conventional (Taplin, 1977) but the speech is jarringly at odds with the tone of the prologue and parodos.
[662] 174-7. I use Seaford's accessible 1996 Aris & Phillips translation throughout.
[663] 177-8.
[664] 185-8.
[665] The other famous transformation of an old man to young in tragedy is that of Iolaus in Euripides' much earlier *Heraclidae* (see chapter 5). There, the transformation allows Iolaus to take to the field of combat and conquer the approaching army. This triumph is preceded by the sacrifice of a young person and ends with the establishment of a cult. And both plays have an absence of a middle range population. While the play is very different to *Bacchae* in many ways, the transformation of an old man to a young one there, as will be seen in *Bacchae*, results in violence. It seems probably that such themes of violence and rejuvenation would have been present in plays on Medea and the daughters of Pelias, such as the fragmentary *Peliades* by Euripides (Collard & Cropp, 2008, pp.60-71) Fragment 609 of this play suggests that the character is young men, and how it is influenced by others within a group formed sort part of the narrative action.

the greatest honour to Dionysus, Cadmus asks of Tiresias: 'shall I lead you like a child, although we are both old men?'[666] Not only have they become young, they have completely regressed to a prematurity.[667]

This regression, seemingly bypassing a young adult age at which they would be youthful, and yet mature enough to have mastery of their wits, is part of the Euripidean model of political incompetence at Thebes.[668] But is also reflects the realities of Dionysiac worship in historical Athens. At the annual festival of Anthesteria, celebrations revolved around wine, the liquid intoxicant most associated with Dionysus. Such was the importance of wine that the entire community, including slaves and children, were expected to imbibe on the second day of the festival, the day of 'the Jugs', or *Choes*.[669] In a fascinating passage in Plato's *Laws* (Book II, 666b-c) reference is made to rejuvenation through worship of Dionysus, and the ritual drinking of wine, by an Athenian speaker. Intriguingly, Plato has the Athenian suggest a recommended wine drinking limit for different age groups: nothing for under eighteens as they: 'must be on their guard against the madness that is habitual in

[666] 193.
[667] See Beaumont (2012) on Athenian views on the characteristics of pre-adolescents. Similarities were seen between children and women and the feminisation of the old men, and later Pentheus, underscores their regressions from adult (male) political decision makers to effeminate, infantilised passive subjects of political control. The important role of children and women in cult and ritual further strengthens these resonances.
[668] Scholarly opinion on the comedic elements of this scene has oscillated wildly over hundreds of years. I share Seidensticker's view (1978, pp.303-20) that the interaction between the old men is both tragic and comic, intensifying the tragic through an ironic use of the blackest of comedy. See also Foley on the ironic content, widely deployed by Euripides, and deployed for particular effect in *Bacchae* (1985, pp.205-58) to intensify the sense of the ridiculous AND the tragic.
[669] Evans, N. (2010, pp.176-8). See also Aris. *Frogs* 344-8 for rejuvenation in Dionysiac ritual.

youth'; moderate amounts for under thirties; and for those approaching forty and older, as much as they want in order to gain the beneficial rejuvenating effects.[670]

As Pentheus enters the stage, it becomes clear that, in terms of those with political influence, there are just the young and old at Thebes, and the old have lost their capacity for offering sensible counsel, becoming little more than intoxicated infants.[671] In annual ritual, such abnegation of ordinary responsibility is accepted for a few days across the community. However, such festivals did not involve permanent physical destruction, just temporary dissolution of social distinctions. In historical Athens, the community celebrating the Anthesteria did welcome into the city a foreign power, in the form of Dionysus, but as part of celebrations that would cement community cohesion. In *Bacchae*, in part, Dionysus has already introduced a forced conversion of the womenfolk to his ritual. Against this backdrop, the older men appear all too quick to embrace the new religious hegemony, perhaps due to their drunkenness of spirit, whereas Pentheus, as we shall see, suffers from the intoxication of youth and, like Achilles in *Iphigenia in Aulis*, will lose his personality (after making a similarly precipitous *volte-face*).

At this point, it is worth considering what actual psychological effect submergence in a group might have, and how this translates to the political realm. It is easy to lapse into the view of groups as simple 'mobs', as can be interpreted in the case in *Iphigenia in*

[670] Belfiore (1986, pp.421-37) has much of interest to say on the role of wine in allowing the non-rational (or youthful) to escape repression by the old, particularly in relation to the concept of *catharsis*. She makes an excellent job of synthesising a tough Platonic and a softer Aristotlean view of aesthetics relating to ancient poetry.
[671] See Richardson (1933, pp.15-30) for ancient views on the advice-giving abilities of old men.

Aulis, where a clear class bias in speeches of the aristocratic main characters defines the rank and file soldiery in an undifferentiated negative light. Writing in the early twentieth century and building on earlier work, most notably that of Gustave Le Bon,[672] Freud makes some interesting observations on the common view of group psychology at the time:

> Since a group is in no doubt as to what constitutes truth or error, and is conscious, moreover, of its own strength, it is as intolerant as it is obedient to authority. It respects force and can only be slightly influenced by kindness, which it regards merely as a form of weakness. What it demands of its heroes is strength, or even violence. It wants to be ruled and oppressed and to fear its masters. Fundamentally it is entirely conservative, and it has a deep aversion to all innovations and advances and an unbound respect for tradition.[673]

This description of typical group characteristics was not completely supported by Freud, but he did believe it was one that would be familiar to pre-modern societies. In *Bacchae*, those principal figures in Thebes who are doing all they can to demonstrate their loyalty to the new group, Tiresias and Cadmus, quite clearly share an intolerance to dissent, a sense of the absolute morality of their choices, are in awe of Dionysius' power and reject the modern political realm for an ancient cultic one. Moreover, again using Freud, through Dionysus they appear to be engaged in a 'death-drive', 'an urge in organic life to restore an earlier state of things'.[674] That is, through acceptance of Dionysus' divine authority they are rejecting the king's temporal political power and

[672] Le Bon (1896) (see introduction I) and Kraskovic's (1915). Kraskovic uses various examples from the ancient world to illustrate his points.
[673] Strachey, 2001, pp.78-9.
[674] p.308. This *Eros*- opposed, *Thanatos*-associated concept remains a contentious one but seen in an abstract way, supports the proposition that there is a fundamentally destructive and regressive nature of conservative groups.

through this they hope to achieve some form of rejuvenation, albeit one that an audience might correctly guess will end in some form of dissolution, or, in the Freudian conceptualisation of the death-drive, a return to nothingness.

This description so far fits the commonplace view of the unthinking, destructive mob. But both Le Bon and Freud agree that group psychology is greatly influenced by the qualities of those who occupy a leadership position within the group, or as they call it 'prestige'. These prestigious individuals can affect in a group, by strength of character, and facilitated through the suggestibility of the group, a dynamic that is: 'capable of high achievements in the shape of abnegation, unselfishness, and devotion to an ideal.'[675] In essence, groups can be creative as well as destructive and these differences depend on individuals with great influence who are already part of the group. In Euripides' play, Dionysus aside, there appear to be no individuals charismatic enough to mitigate the totality of submergence into the group: Pentheus' weakness of character (regarded by the older Thebans as due to his youth) means he cannot effectively challenge Dionysus. Moreover, Pentheus is not even in control of his own city. For the Thebans, this group psychology, as per Freud, is the same as the psychology evident in those suffering neurosis (and possibly that demonstrated in the Athenian *Ekklēsia* such as in the treatment of the generals after the sea-battle, discussed above p.245): 'a hysterical symptom is based upon phantasy instead of upon the repetition of real experience, and the sense of guilt in an obsessional neurosis is based upon the fact of an evil intension which was never carried out.'[676] Although Pentheus (only at first, it must be said) assesses the situation accurately, the

[675] p.79.
[676] P.80.

expectations of the old men and that of Pentheus, once he is under the yoke of the god, are based on pure fantasy, and demonstrate a kind of childish wish fulfilment, an absolute indulgence of their enflamed *thumoi*.

Youth, then, in this view of group psychology, can only play a destructive role in these plays. They are not, by ancient standards, psychologically equipped to fulfil the 'prestige' role, due to their tendency towards indulging an enflamed *thumos*. Furthermore, as is the case in the earlier *Orestes*, and historically in the case of the *hetairiai*, youth groups are essentially constructed in opposition to society. In the Le Bon model, that Freud critiques, youth groups can never be creative. Applying this perspective to *Bacchae*, Pentheus will either be completely subsumed into the group, losing all sense of self, or will act in total opposition, propelling society towards complete breakdown. Indeed, the young king eventually suffers the first, after taking part in the second.

Returning to the play, Pentheus also enters the stage in a state of agitation. But he is far from ecstatic when faced with the encroaching Maenads. To him, they are clearly a threat, having encouraged the entire female population of the city to relocate to the mountainside in a frenzy. It is not just the female depopulation that enrages him, it is the behaviour of Tiresias and Cadmus, 'the sight of your old age without sense',[677] that is doubly infuriating. Pentheus clearly has a low opinion of those in old age. When he says that they are only free from imprisonment because of their old age, it is because he considers them as senile, rather than as deserving respect as old men.

[677] 252.

While the chorus, who by now appear inside the city (it can only be assumed that one of the old men has opened the gates for them), react with anger, saying: 'what impiety!'[678] Tiresias adopts a patronising tone, when addressing Pentheus, that quickly descends into insult:

> When an intelligent man chooses a good basis for his speech, it is no great task to speak well. But you have a fluent tongue as if possessed of understanding, yet in your words there is no sense. A man whose capability comes through boldness and who is able to speak proves a bad citizen, for he is without sense.[679]

Through Tiresias, Euripides offers a commonplace formulation for creating the basis of good political engagement, but one which is very much fixed within an age-related framework. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, this formulation, the requirement of mastery of thought processes (*dianoia*) and speech for properly controlled discussion of political issues and the correct approach to decision-making, is demonstrated through arguments between Creon and Antigone, and Creon and Haemon and shows how the older man has allowed an enflamed *thumos* to distort his political views.[680] Sophocles presents an inversion of the conservative view of young people, and at a time of confidence in Athenian society demonstrates that a faulty 'youthful' approach to political involvement and leadership is not necessarily linked to age, but to a state of mind. Here, Tiresias re-presents the conservative view and makes it clear, from his much older viewpoint, that Pentheus' judgement is unsound because of the young

[678] 263.
[679] 267-71.
[680] See chapter 4 on *Antigone* for detailed discussion on the relationship between control of *dianoia* and age.

king's age; addressing him as young man (*ho neos)* Tiresias completes his address to Pentheus by laying out Dionysius' lineage, his contributions to mortal wellbeing and his power. In his final reasoning for succumbing to the cult, the seer compares the desire for honour that Pentheus feels, and that which Dionysus demands.

Superficially, these arguments appear sound. But considered within the immediate context of the play there is reason to question Tiresias' judgment. Firstly, Dionysus does not come seeking equal honour. In the prologue, Dionysus says: 'For this city must learn to the full, even if it does not want to, what it is to be uninitiated.'[681] The god does not simply demand honour, but for Thebes to suffer. His pre-emptive strike on the city, the madness he has inflicted on the women, demonstrates that he wishes to destroy and dissolve, as well as subdue. And it is the menacing way in which his demands are stated that makes the light-heartedness of Tiresias and Cadmus all the more worrying. The gleeful manner in which the two older men accept the situation looks like complete capitulation to an unstoppable power that is intent on destruction. While Tiresias' role as a seer goes some way to explaining his compliance with a new religious cult, it is difficult to understanding why Cadmus, who struggled so hard to establish the city, is so easily persuaded to support a force which will destroy it.

Pentheus' grandfather, however, does suggest that submission could be deceptive, that Pentheus should 'tell a lie in a good cause'.[682] But this admission makes his willingness to comply all the more baffling, his accompanying giddiness either the early

[681] 39-40.
[682] 334.

onset of bacchic frenzy or a complete submission to the *external* group. Indeed, Tiresias, leading Cadmus to Cithaeron, where the bacchants are gathered, says: 'we must be slaves (*douleuteon*) to Bakchos.'[683] Their unquestioning acceptance of a potential destructive new cult is at odds with the unquestioning opposition by Pentheus. The opposition of youth to wider society has already been discussed at length in the preceding chapter and Pentheus fits a typical youth role in defining himself by opposing his views to the older characters. In a functioning society, the role of the older men would be to deliberate and advise in a manner that would allow Pentheus to integrate into the community, or at least come to terms with the difficult decisions he has to make (as is the case with Neoptolemus in *Philoctetes*). But there is practically no deliberation and no chance of compromise and the absence of a moderating influence exacerbates the problem.[684]

The interchange between Pentheus and Tiresias (with Cadmus playing a supporting role) provides a view of political dialogue that is fractured into binary opposites: absolute opposition to Dionysus and absolute submission. With the very existence of Thebes seemingly at stake, there appears a stark absence of objective political debate and the pragmatic view of Cadmus, 'to tell a lie in a good cause,' is compressed into a single line, completely obscured by the primary arguments of the two other Theban characters currently on stage. Euripides has the older men describe themselves as

[683] 366.

[684] The moderation brought by older men was considered vitally important at Symposia where wine was abundantly on offer. In a story from Atheneaus (Timaeus 566F 149 in Athen. 37b-d), a group of young symposiasts become so drunk they believe they are aboard a ship upon a stormy sea and begin hurling furniture out into the street. In the ancient world, the absence of older men at Symposia was a well-known risk. Slater (1976) uses this passage to fix Symposia and drunkenness within a maritime metaphorical framework, one greatly influenced by Dionysus.

feeling young again, even like children, whilst also suggesting that Pentheus' view of things is faulty because of his youthfulness. From an idealised Athenian political point of view, there is a lack of proper debate, with each side of the argument associated with an immaturity of *dianoia* (through the first and second childhoods). In short, Euripides appears to have created a fictionalised world in which there is no moderating influence and the absence of a middle range of male citizens from the play indicates where this moderating force might once have been located. Instead of full debate on the consequences of various courses of action, Tiresias and Pentheus stubbornly, rigidly hold their political positions and the result is that a form of political paralysis takes hold. As is the case in *Iphigenia in Aulis*, this state leads to a loss of political control, as other forces begin to dictate the course of events (here, Dionysus, there the Greek army). As in contemporary Athens (see above), the lack of proper political control resulted in a sort of self-inflicted damage. Surely, the only beneficiary of such political dysfunction, contemporarily the ex-judicial execution of the generals, was Athens'/Thebes' enemies.

In summary, when youth are politically marginalised they are shown in tragedy to have a tendency towards destructiveness. The apparent method of negating this tendency is to ensure that youth are part of the political process and as such firmly enmeshed in society. In *Bacchae,* the political process has already fractured and the youth in nominal control has already resorted to violence, leading the city down the path to destruction. The question then, is who should respond to Dionysus. The King is misguided by an obsession with honour, the elder statesmen appear to have already given up on Theban sovereignty of the city, the women have all been driven mad and

the herdsmen have been driven off their lands. And amongst this there remains the absence of any middle-range male characters. In the face of the assault by en external group, the internal group has lost cohesion and become atomised. To meet the threat, unity is required but this is a clearly absent quality. In fact, submergence with the Dionysiac cult has already begun, one fractured part of society at a time.

By the time Cadmus makes a more realistic assessment of the impact of Dionysus on Thebes (just, yet excessive),[685] it is too late. Reacting to the presentation of Pentheus' head by a stupefied Agave, the old man successfully talks his daughter down from her delusional state of revel, displaying the ability to properly counsel and guide that is missing at the play's opening. His words to Dionysus, when he appears *ex machina*, also reflect a more nuanced analysis of the god's actions, questioning the wholesale nature and rapidity of the god's destruction.[686] It is as if the earlier intoxication has worn off and his political understanding has returned, or rather he has progressed back to an adult capacity for sound *dianoia* once he has become individuated from the bacchants. The words spoken by the messenger as he reports Pentheus' death before this scene are telling: 'The best thing is to be moderate (*sōphronein*) and to revere the things of the gods: and I think that this is the wisest possession for mortals to use.'[687] As in *Iphigenia in Aulis*, the characters in *Bacchae* fail adequately to display such wisdom. Their hasty actions and inconsistent decision-making, fuelled by the intoxication of atavistic group thinking or youthful rashness, and unchecked by proper deliberative questioning, bring about the city's destruction.

[685] 1249-50.
[686] 1344-8.
[687] 1152-3.

Chapter 9

The case for a youth studies in Classics

In this final section I summarise the evidence presented thus far and assess whether it supports the core argument of this thesis. Following this summation, some suggestions will be made for potentially fruitful areas of further research, alongside a critique of the methodology that has been previously deployed.

This investigation has focussed on sources from, and society in, Athens, and has done so unapologetically. Such a specific geo-cultural focus is justified because the high point of ancient Greek culture, the fifth century BCE, offered an astonishingly direct cultural transmission of the tensions within society, via the dramatic medium of tragedy, to a large-scale audience. For its time, this process was comparable to modern popular media in supporting a dynamic link between society and culture, and so offered evidence for the popular social constructions of the period. Quite simply, until the emergence of early modern theatre in sixteenth-century England, no art-form ever again emerged in such perfect synergy with its method of production and transmission that would allow social and political consciousness to be created, framed and communicated via drama to a large part of the community (in western European culture at least). Just as importantly, the direct democracy of the period I have chosen to explore, and the various revolutions and counter-revolutions of the last decade of the fifth century, would have meant that the audience of productions of Greek tragedy, accustomed to witnessing overtly political performances in a public arena,

would have their own lives discernibly impacted by the real-world equivalent of the issues explored in theatre. What this would have meant is that the ancient audience would have been well equipped to compare political content in Greek tragedy with their contemporary context, all the while being aware of the consequences of political decision-making.

The core argument throughout this thesis has been that not only was Greek - Athenian - tragedy political but that almost without exception tragedy was concerned at some level with the role of youth in society. At the most fundamental level this ostensibly social anxiety was political too, and this thesis began by restating the core political question put by tragedy: how should society operate in the polis? The role of youth in society, as demonstrated through all the sources, both in and extraneous to tragedy, was consistently and prominently of great concern to the Athenians of the period. As discussed throughout this thesis, the social was communicated as the political through tragedy, and this articulation took many discursive forms: as anxiety over the shift of power between generations in *Prometheus*; as an exploration of the extent to which young people should be allowed to participate in political decision-making in *Antigone*; as an examination of society's expectations of youth in times of war in *Heraclidae*; as questioning what limits should be placed on youth's autonomy in *Philoctetes*; as an enquiry into how political factionalisation along age groups lines should be managed in *Orestes*; and as a demonstration of the consequences of the mismanagement of intergenerational relations in *Bacchae*. As such, youth was a deeply political issue and it therefore comes as no surprise that themes associated with youth play such an important role in tragedy.

What is perhaps a little more surprising is the sheer diversity of representations of young people in tragedy which this thesis has identified. If the Aristophanic view is to be believed (a perspective unreflectively adopted by too many scholars), all young people are argumentative, insubordinate and prone to violence. Indeed, it is the case, if the plays surveyed in detail in this thesis are truly representative, that tragedy contains characterisations of young men and women who are by turns aggressive, disrespectful and bloody-minded. But in tragedy they are also shown to be at times honest, physically brave, intellectually mature, morally courageous and loyal. Their relationships to society are always difficult and this is often due to the manipulative interference of older men in their personal agency. They often face outright hostility from an older generation, and have to constantly struggle to have their voices heard and their achievements recognised. If this thesis is to have achieved its aim, it will have demonstrated the rewards of a much more nuanced reading than has previously been achieved of the way in which youth are handled in the genre of tragedy, which provides richly divergent portraits of young people, as a correlate of the much more complex way in which youth would of course actually have been viewed in contemporary society.

I do not argue, as others have done, for a discernible 'generation gap' in fifth-century Athens. I consider such retrojections of this modern concept into the classical period anachronistic as they fail to take into adequate account the contextual factors that determined this use of language (ones that are semantically firmly rooted in the mid-twentieth century). For the post-World War Two generation, in Britain and America at

least, the term ‘generation gap’ was a useful phrase that was deployed to underscore that upcoming generational unit’s identity in opposition to the preceding generation, as well as to establish what that earlier generation collectively perceived as the expectations that the new generation failed to meet. These expectations were largely to do with respect for authority and tradition. There were very real technological and demographic factors that facilitated this social phenomenon and intensified the sense of disconnect between the two generations. Since the 1950/60s, the notion of a ‘generation gap’ appears often to be used to describe the popular social construction of the (almost) tacitly-accepted difference in values between generations, and has often been less antagonistic in nature. As such, just half a century after working its way into the popular imagination, the term ‘generation gap’ has become shorthand for what is conceived as the trans-historically consistent state of mutual suspicion and misunderstanding between each existing and new generation, even though the precise use of the term was first specifically produced, at a specific moment, in response to specific contextual factors.

When one speaks of intergenerational conflict, or opposition, however, the case is quite different. Instructively, there is now a newfound anger amongst many young people who believe a kind of intergenerational theft has taken place, one whereby all publicly funded services enjoyed by the ‘baby-boomers’ have been withdrawn. This anger appears to be a response to an acute political crisis in which economic contractions have acutely impacted on young people. The subsequent expression of these young people’s anger, through protest, has thus been cast in the popular media as wanton vandalism by gangs of unruly youth, as was the case with recent student

protests, nationwide riots and a wave of university sit-ins. One thinks back to other times of political crisis, such as during the anti-war/radical left-wing movements of the late 1960 and early 1970s, which were partly results of the Cold War, and the very negative popular views of young people engaged in protest (most notoriously in the events at Berkeley, California/Berkeley Square, London). One sees that in the modern period intergenerational conflict breaks out into near-stasis at times of the most acute political tensions. And at these times the conflict has been transactional, in that the younger generation, since they now have some forms of limited political power, recognise the constraints placed upon them and displace the anger resulting from this recognition into antagonistic action. Correspondingly, some sections of the older generations who still hold substantive political power use the media at their disposal to present these actions as part of an atavistic narrative that presents any political views held by youth or action taken by young people to be simple and unconsidered youthful idealism or recklessness. It is this form of rupture in the constant of anxious intergenerational relations, caused by political crisis, that I believe was demonstrably present in late fifth-century Athens as a consequence of the Peloponnesian Wars.

Furthermore, I have argued that evidence is available for the existence of a kind of youth culture in classical Athens, that is, the empirically discernible existence of recognisably 'Mannheimian' generational units that formed identities based on age and in opposition to wider society. This, I have proposed, could only exist because of the demographic and political changes that weakened vertical dynastic power structures whilst encouraging lateral, democratic ones. Greek tragedy demonstrates the centrality of young people to society and to political decision-making, as well the

tensions arising from the short-lived transition from standard atavistic views on the control of unruly young men to a more sympathetic perspective on the contribution that young men could make, before the collapse of Imperial Athens reintroduced the earlier dominant perception of youth. As a result, young people began to find a voice in both culture and politics, and even perhaps the power to change the course of Athenian history, albeit with disastrous results in Sicily. In short, I have suggested that youth culture may have first developed in recorded literary history not in the 1950s but in the 450s BCE. The fact that this culture then disappeared from view for thousands of years is perhaps for further discussion by experts on other historical periods. It may not have ever really dissipated, but rather have gone underground, never to find literary expression that has survived for us to read throughout later antiquity, the transformation of the world of the pagan Mediterranean into the world of Christianity and Islam, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the Early Modern, Enlightenment, revolutionary and Victorian periods. On the other hand it may well be the case that modern perceptions have been so bound up in the notion of youth culture developing in the 20th century that research has simply not been carried out on other historical periods.

Of the thirty-three extant full plays of ancient Greek tragedy, and the hundreds of fragments, this thesis has investigated a very small proportion in any great detail. There is consequently immense scope to expand this thesis to become a larger project that aims to examine themes to do with youth in Greek tragedy exhaustively. One might question why this would be useful. I would answer that a greatly improved understanding of youth in tragedy would be useful in two ways. First, this area is

under-researched, and represents a major gap in classicists' understanding of the ancient world. Throughout the discussion I have challenged the prevailing categorisation of an undifferentiated 'troublesome youth' that is so often used by classical scholars, reflecting an unquestioning use of this stock character by Aristophanes. In the last half century, great strides have been made in taking seriously the role of women in tragedy, as well as slaves and those not of aristocratic birth, and those of different ethnicity, in order to create ways of reading 'fictional' literature so as to illuminate these groups' historical place in ancient society. And so it should be. But the young people of ancient Greek drama have yet to experience this type of sustained interest and it is this change that I hope to affect, in some small way. A variety of non-tragic sources have been included in this investigation, and it would be extremely useful if a wider research exercise could take place re-assessing how representations of youth in these sources might also reflect oscillating attitudes towards young people in fifth-century Athens. Together, such a comprehensive reappraisal of the ancient sources from a particular perspective would be a major, and long-term undertaking. This assumes that research is clearly focused on the historical period on which this thesis focuses, largely the second half of the fifth century, and the city from which most of the sources are derived, Athens. More widely, a very major area of research could be envisaged. Sources relating to both Republican and Imperial Ancient Rome, in particular, have great potential for interrogation of themes associated with youth, for example relating to the gang-like behaviours associated with supporters of different chariot racing factions.

A sceptic might say that focussing on the presentation of youth serially in individual tragedies distorts the overall picture. However, wherever possible, I have attempted to integrate the most obvious thematic uses of 'youth' from other plays into my discussion. The sceptic might also complain that plays have been arbitrarily selected, or worse, deliberately cherry-picked in order to support the historical argumentational arc, that young people are treated more favourably in literature (as a response to more favourable treatment in culture and society) during times of political stability. It is true that the plays analysed in detail do come from periods of particular historical importance. But then so do many others that I have not selected. A parallel thesis, for example, could have chosen to follow detailed discussion of the following plays: *Persae, Eumenides, Ajax* (although I am aware that this play is undated)*, Hippolytus, Troades, Iphigenia in Aulis*, and the result would be identical. The exact plays investigated are less important than the core argument that issues to do with youth are universal in tragedy and highly responsive to the political context. The original contribution that this thesis makes to the field thus lies in both the central argument: that youth are presented in tragedy in a way that is relatable to the political milieu; and in the method, through detailed discussion of such themes via close readings focused on tragic Greek texts.

It is also true that much historical ground is covered very quickly in the rough chronological structure of this thesis, and future research may benefit from a more synchronic approach that could draw out more fully the tensions in society of which social anxiety centred on youth forms a part. But perhaps more critically, it is still incredibly difficult to reconstruct the voices of non-aristocratic youth and this difficultly

severely limits the ability to effectively draw conclusions regarding popular conceptions of youth across social strata. Of course, the voices of young women not of aristocratic birth are all but non-existent.

Since this is the case, any strains and tensions in my argumentation are largely consequences of the lacunose nature of the evidence, exacerbated by the current dearth of classical scholarship on youth in Greek Tragedy. I would hope that addressing these problems directly will lead to the development of a youth studies in Classics, a new sub-discipline that would shine new light on old sources.

Secondly, and just as importantly, Classics, like all disciplines, requires regular reinvigoration. Now, more than ever, the academy must demonstrate its relevance to wider society and one way in which this can be done is through broadening its appeal to non-specialists. To me, it is quite stunning that this discipline, one that so often makes use of source material that relates to youth in some way, does not exploit the potential appeal to young people to the full. I would hope that the creation of a youth studies strand within Classics would contribute significantly to both the widening of participation in Classics and engagement of the general public with research from the ancient world.[688]

[688] Natalie Haynes' 2014 novel, *The Amber Fury*, offers a fictive description of the use of tragedy in educating delinquent youth. I would like to think that the general premise would be realisable, but with more positive overall outcomes.

This is not to say that the sum of research on young people in ancient society has been unhelpful. Rather, I propose that it is time for a generation of thinkers to take on the mantle of interrogating the past, but with a perspective reinvigorated by more recent societal and academic evidence for the dynamic between popular conceptions of youth and their representation in mass media. I finish with a poem, *I am 25*, from Gregory Corso's, a 1950s 'beat' poet, and one who is said to have almost taken up a career as a classical scholar. I would like to think that this poem's sentiment would be recognisable to both the older and young generations in classical Athens:

With a love a madness for Shelley
Chatterton Rimbaud
And the needy-yap of my youth
        Has gone from ear to ear:
  I HATE OLD POETMEN!
Especially old poetmen who retract
Who consult other poetmen
Who speak their youth in whispers,
Saying: - I did those then
        But that was then
        That was then –
O I would quiet old men
Say to them: - I am your friend
        What you once were, thru me
        You'll be again –
Then at night in the confidence of their homes
Rip out their apology-tongues
        And steal their poems

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